







# LIFE'S SHOP WINDOW

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AND  
THE OTHER

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# SELF AND THE OTHER

BY  
VICTORIA CROSS

Author of  
"Life's Shop Window,"  
"The Eternal Fires,"  
etc., etc.

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**LIFE OF MY HEART.**

**FIVE NIGHTS.**

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The lover of the Soul remains its lover throughout his life, inasmuch as he has united himself to that which is everlasting.

—*Plato.*



# Self and the Other.

## CHAPTER I.

### BEFORE.

WE were all sitting round the fire in my rooms; I and Herbert and Wilson and Morritz the German, all men of my college and good acquaintances of mine; I do not hold with making friends, they are always far more trouble than pleasure. I had one mistress and one friend, beloved by me with the whole force of my nature; my mistress was Knowledge and my friend was Myself, the great Ego, and all other human affections and attachments I passed by as disturbing influences.

There had been a long pause in the conversation, and my eyes had wandered away from the fire to the snowflakes drifting by the pane, when Wilson said suddenly :

"When do you go up?"

I turned to answer, but a fit of coughing seized me; I managed, however, between gasps to reply:

"Six months hence."

"You'll be going out, not up, old man, if you don't take care," said Herbert.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Wilson across me, for I was still speechless.

"Phthisis, I should think," replied Herbert in a comfortable way, settling himself still farther back in my arm-chair.

"Nonsense!" I said angrily, "I have congestion of the lungs; I know the sound of this cough quite well."

"Well, look out for that old *σωμα*<sup>1</sup> of yours; remember even Plato allows we are *σωμα και ψυχη*<sup>2</sup>

"Unfortunately we are too often reminded of the fact to be able to forget it," I said gloomily; "the body is too weak, too weak for its work."

"Only because you let the mind consume it, and eat it away," replied Wilson.

"A servant is no use that can't work," I answered.

"Nor is he of any use if you work him out of the world."

Here Morritz, who had been regarding us

<sup>1</sup> Body.

<sup>2</sup> Body and soul.

in solid silence, said meditatively, tapping my head :

“ If you wear ze little smoking cap, you catch no more colds.”

We all laughed at this descent to practicalities, and I got up and stretched myself. I was ill in body and depressed in mind, and every word they said increased my impatience.

They took my rising as a signal to depart, themselves, and I was glad. We had sat there since luncheon, and it was now dusk ; the air was smoky and I could hardly breathe. They dispersed and I walked back to the hearth, folded my arms on the mantelpiece, laid my head on them and groaned. I was ill ; yes, I had broken down in the middle of my work six months before my exam.

That which I had so dreaded and so carefully guarded against had come to pass. Now, in spite of all my efforts, the great Ego was ill. The body was suffering, but its suffering was nothing, its incapacity was all.

I regarded my body as a harsh but cunning master regards his slave, to whom his food and sleep are bitterly grudged and jealously measured, but nevertheless for whom they are scrupulously provided, because the slave is a valuable slave, nay, indispensable.

O bitter dependence of soul upon body!  
O loathsome bond and debt that fetters the  
mind!

Rule as it will with the most exacting  
empire, subdue and conquer the body as it  
may, the soul yet remains dependent on its  
slave.

I tried always to keep this before me, in  
spite of the sophistry of Plato that I had  
steeped myself in, and I watched and tended  
and cherished my slave in order that I might  
grind the best work from him—work him,  
work him to the bone. And he had worked  
faithfully and well, and he had been worked  
to the bone; and now when all was going  
well, when the Mind was lashing him along  
the stony course, yoked to her victorious car,  
he stumbled and fell, and the Mind in  
agonised fury could only foam and writhe  
in her stationary chariot.

I had seen a doctor, and he had told me,  
what I knew, that I was suffering from an  
attack of congestion of the lungs; also, what  
I was not so sure about, that I must give  
up all work for the present.

“Patch me up and let me get back to my  
work as soon as possible,” I had said to him.

“You should take a fortnight’s rest, at  
least,” he had answered. “You are very

much pulled down, and your nervous system is in such a state that it prevents your shaking this off."

Should I obey him, or should I force the feeble body on? It was trained to work through all pain and sickness and in spite of all fatigue. Had not some of my best lambics been written between the paroxysms of headache? Had not Anglo-Saxon roots been dug out of the dictionary with my hands trembling from debility? Yes, but now was there not danger in trampling upon weakness? Wilson's words sounded still in my ears:

"Neither is he of any use if you work him out of the world."

A wave of terror swept slowly over me; cold and trembling I sank into a chair, the sweat gathering in my weak and quivering palms.

"True, true," I murmured to the opposite wall; "let the work go, I can make it up afterwards; I must get well."

The horror born of my shaken nerves grew upon me. In the silence of the empty room I could hear the wheezing of the lungs like the creaking of girding cart wheels.

Suppose I became a cripple? a consumptive cripple? unable to work? perhaps an early

death?. My imagination, always feverish, extravagant, and more or less disordered, always prone to picture the worst of all possible evils as about to fall upon me, rushed away with me now headlong. Vision upon vision of hopeless breakdown, of helpless invalidism, of death, rushed through my mind. Dark shadows, like the presage of evils days, fled across the blank wall fronting me, the sorrowful predictions in the wailing choruses of the Greek tragedies seemed to fill the air.

A nameless, causeless, baseless Horror was upon me. An abject Misery fettered me, clung to me. Oh, to be free, to escape, escape! But from one's Self there is no escape.

I got up, and with trembling fingers struck a match and lighted up the two gas-jets, one on each side of the fireplace, drew down the blind, and then returned to my chair.

I must not read, must not embrace my beloved mistress that night. What then? One must think, think always. I looked round my room to try and find some trivial occupation for my thoughts, but what could that same old room, familiar to me for the last three years, afford? There were the old walls, hung with the large maps; the

case of college books on the right ; the large table littered with my own on the left, and an imitation mahogany pedestal with a cheap little cast of Plato standing on it by the window.

I had sent the fellows away, "but after all, were not those light voices, those trivial inanities of conversation, better than this unbroken, relentless silence? I wished them back ; this led me to look at my watch, 6.30 ; in half an hour more dinner would be ready in the college, distant from my rooms only the length of the street. I would join it. Prudence, to whose voice my egotistic nature was always accustomed to listen, whispered that if companionship was irritating in my present frame of mind, solitude was dangerous, dangerous to what? To my intellectual balance, to the brain that I knew was destined to carry the palm but six months hence in the conflict of the Indian Civil Service Exam. Surely it would not fail me before, just before my triumph? I began to walk restlessly up and down the room, thinking as usual of myself.

I, the best Indian Civil Service candidate in the college, the pride and hope and pet of the tutors ; I, who was taking up more subjects than were generally attempted ; I, who

was going, in short, to be the marvel and wonder of the coming June. I, to break down? Impossible.

How I was envied too! How the other fellows in the college longed for and lusted after my ease and familiarity with all my subjects; my facility of learning; the knowledge stored up in my congested brain; all fruits of hours and hours of painful labour and paid for actually in flesh and blood and strength and spirits; but they never seemed to consider the price I had paid; they saw my possessions and envied them and grudged them to me. Not one candidate in our special class of 2nd year students but would have changed places joyfully with me; me, who in one single quarter of an hour would suffer more than they would probably be called upon to suffer in the whole course of their lives; me, who lived in a perfect hell, surrounded always by the nightmare of my depressed spirits.

Where great and abnormally developed intellectuality is combined with absolute and exclusive egoism, a well organised hell is the result; add to these prolonged strain and habitual solitude, and they produce the maniac and suicide. I often wondered which I should become first. And they envied me! To them I appeared the embodiment of prosperity

and assured success, one whom Nature and fortune alike had exceptionally favoured. True, Nature had been good to me, and I, what had I done? Having possessed a strong constitution and marvellous health, I had drawn heavily upon Nature, and now I suddenly found I had contracted a debt that it might be impossible to pay.

Three years or so back, I had been an athlete, the first in the gymnasium; the best, or among the best, on the river and in it, rower and swimmer; at football and cricket; and then how gradually, imperceptibly yet swiftly, the brain had grown and developed and demanded more and more from me! Less and less time had been given, first to amusement, then to exercise, then to food, and finally to sleep, until at last day or night made no difference to me; when daylight failed, gas supplied its place, and when my swelled eyes refused to distinguish the letter-press any longer, the book was closed and I used to stumble blindly to my bed, or more often only to my sofa. I eat, drank, and talked mechanically. All action seemed to me waste and wasted except what tended to my one desire.

The absorbing lust of learning that knows no satiety grew until it possessed me wholly.

We used to attend chapel twice on Sundays, and I always smiled when the familiar words, "From the pomps and vanities of the world, from the lusts of the flesh and the devil, good Lord, deliver us," fell upon my ears.

Are there<sup>c</sup> not other lusts far mightier and more powerful than these?

I opened the door suddenly, instinctively trying to escape from the horrible companionship of myself.

All was dark outside. I put my hat on and drew my door to. I stepped into the hall and out into the street. An icy wind swept along to meet me, and an acute pain seemed to leap up through me and fix itself, like the fangs of a hungry wolf, in the apex of my left lung.

I shuddered, and groped my way along hurriedly in the darkness.

A burst of warm light greeted me as I pushed open the swing door of the large dining-room; the fellows were just collecting round the tables and I walked up and took my usual place between Herbert and Wilson. Talking at meals was distinctly discouraged so we exchanged no words. Grace was mumbled in Latin and the dinner began.

I had taken a few mouthfuls when Wilson accidentally jerked my elbow and my knife fell

first on the edge of the plate and then slid, blade upwards, down on to the form between us. My hand had foolishly pursued it and as it stopped on the form, the upright blade sank deep into my palm. It stuck there fast. As I drew it out with my left hand and twisted my handkerchief round the place, Wilson murmured :—

“Your Persian characters won’t be worth much with that disablement.”

“No, nearly as bad as yours are without it, old man,” I answered, drawing tight the knot of the handkerchief with my teeth. How I despised my *soi-disant* friend for the look of malignant satisfaction with which he watched me draw out the sticking knife!

Soon after I passed up the request to quit the table and withdrew, the blood was soaking through the bandage, and what little amount of appetite I had had was gone. I could not remain in hall if not at the tables, so there was nothing for it but to retreat to my own den again. When I reached it I felt rather more sick and exhausted than before. I glanced at my hand; the blood had ceased to flow and lay under the broken flesh in two purple bags.

True! Such a place would keep my pen idle a week at least.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CONCEPTION.

CLEAR and bright, lucid and calm, like an innocent mind, was the January sky the following morning. I stood leaning against the window frame, listening to the wheezy cackle in my chest, and my puffy eyes wandering over the frost-covered lawn in front. My two rooms had formerly been class-rooms and they looked to the south across a fair sized lawn, bordered by a fringe of tall poplars. The sun was just rising, faint lines of pink lay on my left, and the yellow glow spread slowly upwards through the transparent sky. "From the East, Light." But for me all was darkness.

I turned my head away to the high wall that edged the right of the lawn, and on which the light from the life-giving East was beginning to strike, and stood . . . And then the light fell on me indeed.

Above the wall, standing out sharply defined

against the pale sky, rose a human head : no part of the body, and very little of the neck was visible, and the face and eyes were turned towards the East ; and that head too belonged wholly to the East. Could that head belong to any nationality but the Hindoo or Iranian ? So perfect in its round, slightly brachycephalic form, small and yet so intellectual and intelligent. There was no barbarous parting to spoil the effect of form and colour ; the thick ink-coloured, silk-like hair fell in any, or no sort of order over the skull and encroached slightly on the forehead, marvellous for its intellectuality, marked faintly with supraciliary ridges and the characteristic long sweep of the Hindu eyebrow. As I stared on those eyebrows, I fully realised the force of all the many similes in Sanskrit literature, of the bow stretched and the eyebrow, of the glance shot from it like an arrow feathered with black lashes.

And beneath those brows, what eyes ! They were turned now in complete abstraction towards the sunrise and mine fed hungrily upon them undisturbed. What a glorious arch of the upper lid and depth of colour in the iris, and what a soft, gentle brilliance in the sensitively dilated pupil ! But beautiful though the physical architecture of the eyes was, it was

not that which held my gaze so relentlessly as the wonderful expression of mild beneficence, of gentle, perfect dignity, of absolute sweetness in them; an expression supported by all the other features, the small nose with the thoroughly Eastern arch, the short, curved upper lip, the small, thick, well-formed mouth and rounded chin; in each and every line and curve lay the same all-pervading expression, culminating in the eyes, of inherent sweetness and tenderness. It is a by no means uncommon expression in the East, and I have since met with it there very frequently. Sometimes, if you are a student of the human physiognomy, you may see this same expression of heavenly mildness in the face of a lying, scoundrelly beggar in a native bazaar; but I have never seen it in a Northern countenance, and at that time I had never seen it at all, and the contrast between it and the hard, practical, business-like faces of the English and Scotch, which met my eyes every day, made me feel as if I was looking on the denizen of another world instead of another continent.

Thought, dignity and sweetness are to some extent national characteristics of the Eastern countenance, wholly irrespective of the mind and temperament of the individual; and here these three characteristics combined

in the highest degree in a form of almost faultless physical beauty.

"What a face! A face to live and to die for!" I exclaimed in a whisper to myself, my face pressed almost flat on the pane; and I turned the knob on the window frame to push it open and go out. That characteristic human desire of possession, that stands so often in the way of pure and innocent enjoyment, moved me; not content with the satisfaction given by the beauty before me, I wished to approach it, the eyes turned to the East I wanted to rivet upon mine, the mouth which was in repose I wanted to make move in answer to me; I wanted, in fact, to be master of that beauty for the few moments that I should be speaking to its owner. This strongest instinct in us, this desire to pick the rose, to catch the butterfly, to make our own that which we should enjoy with impersonal contemplation only, how fatal it is to us! •

I pressed the knob, but then I suddenly remembered my creaking lungs; expose them to the chill, frosty air of the winter's morning? No, not even my admiration for beauty could make me forget my all-absorbing Self. With the prudence and caution of systematic egoism I repressed the rash impulse to go

out. I tightly re-screwed the knob, and in the same instant the head disappeared. The sun's rays shone brightly on the red brick wall, but there was no living thing to be seen, and the disappearance of the head had been so instantaneous and silent that it seemed almost as if I had been the victim of some hallucination. I walked from the window to the adjoining room and threw myself upon the bed again. I was shivering with cold, the rooms were both icy; it was just 7.40. The boy who lit the fires would not be round yet; now that I was to refrain from work there was no interest in the day for me. I drew the railway rug over my ears and mercifully went off to sleep again.

It was more than an hour later when I was awakened by a little cracking noise, and I sat up and looked through the communicating doors into my sitting-room. The fire had been lighted and was now burning brightly; the cloth on the table was spread, and apparently my breakfast standing on it; the blind had been drawn higher up and bright sunlight was pouring in. In the bedroom, too, a chair had been drawn up to my bedside, and my bottle of physic, tumbler, spoon, and water set out upon it. Beside these lay a small gold watch, face upwards, apparently

put there to draw my attention to the time for taking the medicine, which was already past. I poured it out and drank it, marvelling who my visitor could have been. I carefully picked up the little watch and went into the other room. •

Could the doctor possibly in an unusual access of friendliness have come to see me? No, this was not his watch; his was a bulbous, massive silver one, with an ornamental face. I made my coffee slowly, reflecting on my different friends' watches, and noticing the care with which every detail for my breakfast had been arranged. I had just finished the last crumb, and sat down in the chair by the fire, when I heard my door open. I looked round.

In the doorway I saw, standing on the threshold, a slight, erect figure, dressed in the hideous English dress of a hospital nurse, but bearing on its shoulders the same dark Eastern face I had seen above the red brick wall in the early morning. She came just inside and salaamed. I started up and bowed; she walked up as far as the table, leaving the door open. I felt the wind blow upon me, and with my usual caution I walked to it and shut it, and then indicated the easy-chair by the fire facing mine; she drew out a

high chair, however from the table and sat down there.

"How are you?" she asked, as an Englishman might have done, and with the ease of an old friend.

"Is this yours?" I asked on a sudden impulse, holding up the watch. The Indian laughed and stretched out her hand.

"Certainly. Was it a very impolite intrusion, my coming in while you were asleep and interfering with your domestic economy?"

"Did you really . . . ? It was extremely kind of you," I said, feeling some embarrassment come upon me. It communicated itself to her, I think, for she spoke the next words looking down, while she fastened the watch on her chain again, and replaced it in her pocket.

"I heard those stupid boys talking about you downstairs, and I thought, 'Poor thing, he is alone up there; how will he manage?' So I came and saw you first, and did all here that you would want, and now I have just been to see your doctor about you."

I said nothing; I was staring at the black head bent down and the smooth brown hands fastening the chain.

"He told me you were very ill, and had no one to look after you, and that you objected to

go into the college infirmary, and I said I would do all I could if you would permit me."

"But why should you?" I answered, in sheer astonishment. "I am a stranger, why should you take any interest in—in—"

The girl lifted her head and leaned back, a marvellous light of kindness and sympathy irradiated the whole face, her lips parted in a bright friendly smile, a soft effulgence seemed actually to beam from the gay brilliant eyes as she answered :

"No living being ought ever to be a stranger to another. You know the altruistic creed? It is the best, is it not? Everything for another—Self nothing. . . . You understand me?"

I looked at her and wondered, and did not dare to tell her the creed I had always professed and practised, the absolute and exclusive egoism of every thought and wish and aim, the deliberate, systematic care of self that had formed the basis of all my plans.

"Altruism is the only, or best religion, is it not?" she repeated, or something to that effect, and I answered feebly :

"Yes."

"Now, what you have to do is," she pursued, in a more ordinary tone, "to keep in one temperature, take that medicine of yours every two hours and do no work, not read a

line." Her eyes wandered over my two tables, littered and piled up with ponderous volumes.

"I'll bring you some papers and novels to read, and order your luncheon to be brought in here."

I suggested there might be some difficulty, but she only laughed and answered :

"A tip to the cook, and that boy will do wonders."

I dived into my pocket at once and drew up half a sovereign, which I tendered towards her; she knitted her brows and waved it away with a negative gesture.

"You must be a virtual prisoner here," she went on smiling; "and that's where my utility to you comes in. All communications with the outside world must be made through me; these cold stone passages would kill a man in your state."

"What did the doctor say of me?" I asked. "When shall I be able to work again?" my thoughts reverting with terrible force to myself. Then a fit of coughing came upon me, of that loose, hollow, rattling cough that seemed to be in the very lowest regions of the lungs. Looking up after it, as I leant back exhausted, I met her eyes fixed upon me with the softest, gentlest look

of sympathy. Lovely though it was in itself and on such a face, I resented it. I had always hated sympathy and pity.

"The doctor thinks very badly of your case, but I do not. It is not chronic; nature with a little help will put that mischief in your chest right. I am very sorry for you; when I heard the heartless way they talk of you, I felt very sorry. I will gladly be of any, any use to you in your sickness."

The last words were said very earnestly, and to my cultivated egoism they appealed at once. She could be of use to me while I was ill certainly; and I must get well.

So those wretched "friends" of mine were laughing and congratulating themselves that I was now out of the running! Ah, indeed! They should see whether I was. A mad fury against all men, and a sickly feeling of despair rose within me, as I saw and heard them in my imagination talking of me; but yet why should I feel resentment against this one being who was so obviously and genuinely sympathetic? And even if I did feel it, I must not allow it to influence my actions to my own detriment. Would it not be foolish of me to drive her away now while I was helpless? I answered gratefully, therefore :

"You are very good ; I really don't know how to thank you." And then as a thought suddenly struck me, I added, "Do you attend at the Medical College in this street?"

"Yes. I am studying medicine ; my exam. comes off very shortly."

"Don't you feel very anxious?" I said.

"Not at all. Why should I be anxious? Being anxious does not benefit anyone."

"No, but it is an implanted and nearly unconquerable instinct in the human mind, I think," I returned, recalling my own sleepless nights and wretched days.

She was silent.

"And what are you going to do if you pass?" I continued.

"I have other studies after, but finally I shall return to India."

"Will you like going back? Do you look forward to it?"

"Yes. I am very homesick."

I was watching the sweet, attractive face opposite me the whole time, and I saw a shade of sadness come over it with the last words.

"You came over to study, I suppose?"

"Certainly. I have been in this country a year at work—I should like to go back."

"It is very praiseworthy of you to stay over

here as an exile merely to learn," I said, half banteringly.

The Indian seemed to fall into a reverie. She looked away into the fire and fixed her eyes on its red caverns as if she saw far into the past or the future.

"Yes," she said, in a low tone; "there is only one thing worth having in this world—knowledge."

That sentence of hers was the keynote, the basis of all that followed; of all the wrongdoing, if wrong it were; of all the pleasure, and pleasure it was; and suffering, if it were suffering. It was spoken with such suppressed and concentrated enthusiasm that it seemed to be the utterance of an unshakeable conviction, and it was as an echo from my own mind; the sentence might have been mine.

I had been three years at the college, at this very respectable seat of learning, and I had never heard any similar utterance from my fellow-students.

When I talked to them of my ambition to obtain a good appointment in the Indian Civil Service, to reach a high place in the examination, my wish to satisfy the pater, and so on, they understood well enough; but when I began to explain that to me the knowledge

itself was the greatest prize of all, they evidently ceased to follow me altogether.

I used at first to try and demonstrate to them the force of Plato's arguments in favour of the love and cultivation of virtue for its own sake, and get them to apply the same to knowledge; but it was simply trying to touch a chord that did not exist in them; they were most of them thoroughly of opinion that "We have to translate Plato, not to understand him," and wonderfully unanimous in the support of the theory that knowledge is wholly and solely a means to an end.

I had long ceased to expect that I should find anyone among the students who held my views, or even sympathised with them.

There was a long pause, and then I said:

"Are you working very hard now?"

"I read a good deal," she answered. "I am afraid I shan't be able to come in this afternoon, as there is a lecture, but I'll send you something to read and see you again in the evening. I have forgotten to ask you, what have you done to your hand?"

"I caught a knife with it, it is nothing."

The Indian raised her eyebrows with a sympathetic expression of pain. "I am very sorry. Shall I see it? Does it hurt you?"

"Not an atom," I answered. "I am so.

worried mentally, that I should hardly feel it if my leg were cut off. What does physical pain matter? It is the mental pain in this world that is so terrible."

"You are quite right, perfectly right," she answered, and got up to go. I rose too.

"I hope you will come to me again," I said. She nodded and smiled, and went out. Immediately I felt sorry I had not asked her name; how did I know she would come to me again? And she interested me. Why had I not found out more about her? I felt suddenly very dull, and the room seemed more empty than it generally did.

It seemed a very bright, pleasing presence that had left me. I felt for once I had been with a companion. For once I had had someone whom I should have liked to stay longer with me: for the first time.

My luncheon came about two, and with it a large bundle of papers, comic and illustrated. I read them with virtuous resignation, with my back turned to my own inviting table of books, and the afternoon slipped away until four, when my door opened suddenly.

I looked up, hoping to see my benefactor appear again; but no, it was a face of the purest Saxon type that looked round the door. It was Green, a candidate like myself for the

I.C.S., and about on a level with me in probability of obtaining a place. He came in and flung himself on the easy-chair by the fire.

"Sorry to see you bowled over like this, old chap," was his first remark; "it will tell against your work, won't it?"

"Not more than I can make up afterwards," I answered carelessly.

"I don't know," he replied, with evident satisfaction; "you seem in a very bad way. I see you have hired a black nurse to look after you."

"An Indian came this morning. I believe the doctor sent her," I said. "I suppose she is a student?"

"Yes. I don't think she has been here very long. She's a funny looking creature."

"She is remarkably good looking," I observed. At which Green laughed contemptuously.

"Good looking! ° Why, she's as black as the devil!"

"Yes; but good looking, don't you think?"

"But she's *black*!"

"Well," I said, leaning back, "have not you ever admired a black horse, or a black marble column, or a carved ebony frame?"

"Oh, ah!" he answered, "that's different."

"I don't see that it is," I answered. "Beauty is an absolute existence; if there is beauty in the form of a thing, the absence or presence of any particular colour cannot affect it."

"But I don't like a black skin," returned Green with much conclusiveness.

"I admire your logic," I remarked, smiling.

"Well," he answered, nettled, I suppose, by my tone, "it's all very fine, but if you met a fellow in the street with bright green face and hair, one colour all over, as this nigger is, you wouldn't think him handsome, however good his features were, would you?"

"Certainly," I said. "There are green bronze heads exhibited at the Royal Academy every year that I and everybody else agree to call beautiful."

"Bronze heads; oh yes, that's different."

I laughed. It was not worth while to carry the argument farther with such an opponent.

"I don't like those natives either," he remarked thoughtfully, after a pause, "men nor women; they look so sweet at you, somehow."

I was silent, while I thought, "How truly British. How like an Englishman. This is the great offence that he brings home to the obnoxious foreigner that has found his way into

the narrowly exclusive and prejudiced English ranks—that he has a sweet expression.”

“Oh, yes,” I answered gravely; “of course that’s disgusting.”

Green had a suspicion that I was mocking him, for he said:

“It seems you’re stuck upon her anyway. Mind this smoke?”

“Yes, I should prefer not just now,” I answered, thinking if he were not permitted to smoke I should be sooner relieved of his presence.

“All right, I’m off then,” he said, getting up. “I only came to see you because the others swore you’d be working all the same, and I said I knew you were too bad. Ta, ta,” and my interesting visitor departed.

I looked round, it was growing dark, the sky outside was black with driving clouds. I got up, pulled down the blinds, lighted the gas and made up the fire; then I drew up the easy-chair facing mine near to it. A pleasant sense of expectancy filled me. Whom, what was I waiting for?

A kindred Mind.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BIRTH.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed and I had recovered. The lungs were perfectly clear; the cough had died utterly away; the doctor had just left me after his last visit, and I stood irresolutely looking through my window.

He had told me I might return to my work, and that in the course of a few weeks the lungs would completely heal, without giving me farther trouble.

That I was excessively thin and weak was an obvious fact, but as far as my work was concerned my mind was made up. That must be continued through everything. I could, would, and must hold out for another five months or so.

The prize of the first place in the Indian Civil Service List was not one to be foregone easily, and I felt sure I was capable of obtaining

that first place for which I had been so long and carefully trained.

It was my duty to obtain it. I was pledged to obtain it—to fulfil all the expectations I had aroused.

Yes, I could and would do it, in spite of the miserable, pitiful state of physical weakness I was in.

My theory had always been that the mind could carry the body triumphantly through all things—that mental force would supply the place of physical, and I was going to put that theory thoroughly in practice now.

The price that we pay afterwards for thus unnaturally forcing our physical system is sometimes too great. Would it be so in my case?

The doctor could not tell, neither could I; but before my interview with him was over my mind had been made up. I must accept the risk.

It was not this question that occupied my thoughts as my eyes wandered restlessly over the dreary prospect outside, but a vaguer, wider, subtler, more indefinite problem.

Through the last fortnight I had been subjected to a new influence, and one emanating from the exterior world of fellow human beings,

with which I fancied I—at present at any rate—had nothing to do.

Through all that fortnight this Nurse Chandmad had been with me night and day, doing everything that a devoted friend can for a sick and imprisoned man.

It was she who had prevented one breath of cold air from visiting my lungs, she who had kept my fire up through the whole period, and my rooms at the same temperature; she who had had all my meals brought to me, and even had made and cooked curries for me herself in some mysterious way in her own rooms; she had given up all her own lectures and her own work in order that she might stay and talk with me. It was she more than doctor or constitution to whom I owed my recovery; it was she who had listened patiently to my wearisome fears and apprehensions and been always ready with sympathy and comfort, she who had most of all lifted me from that cold well of depression into which I had sunk.

I had been so ill that I had accepted the cheering presence as a half somnolent animal feels the sun shining on him, and now that Naranyah had left me to return to her neglected physiology, I woke to a full sense of all she had done, as the animal looks round

when the sun goes in, and I realised the certainly very strong attraction I felt towards her.

It was this strange new feeling that I was considering now, not because of its immediate importance, but its future development. There was something peculiarly ingratiating and seductive about this Asiatic who was so thoroughly un-English, to me who always felt attracted to new theories, thoughts or faces; something very pleasing in the great sympathy and comprehensiveness of her mind; to me who had been in the habit of associating with Englishmen who designated everything they could not understand, or were not accustomed to, as bosh and rot.

Day by day, as I had sat talking with her in my rooms, I had seen revealed to me a very unusual intellect and a marvellously tender, sympathetic, and impressionable character, and I was deeply struck by both. .

Looking back, I saw that I was pleased when she was with me, sorry when she had to leave, expectant when she was absent, vexed when she did not return; in short, the imperturbable indifference to everything except my work was broken into. I cared for something else, and worst of all, for another human being, and I felt instinctively that if I saw much of

the Indian I should inevitably lose entire independence.

And what was the good? She was a creature who was indissolubly bound to her country, her people, her home. ♪

I had been able to see this by glimpses. She tried to fancy herself free from them, and she had for a time emancipated herself from their claims; but still there they were in the indefinite background, and she seemed inextricably bound up with them. She would say nothing of herself nor her affairs, but I had gathered that all was not quite smooth in her home relations, and at any moment apparently she might be peremptorily recalled to India.

What was the good of feeling even deeply interested in one who belonged so wholly to another sphere, and who might be lifted away from me by some invisible and intangible people and concerns in another continent?

"It's no use in this world caring for anything," I muttered to myself, staring into the clouds of whirling snow driving by outside.

"Friendships, affections, passions, they are all alike; nothing but worry and anxiety while you possess the objects of them and misery when you lose them, and they are all disturbing influences on one's work."

My life hitherto had been a worship of

abstracts and singularly free from human affections and distractions, and consequently I had got through almost a superhuman amount of mental labour.

"Yes," I continued, following up this line of thought, "that is the best."

And yet . . . and yet, I did not feel quite certain. I should work and pass my exam. and then? Well, then, everybody would be awfully pleased, especially the pater, and then after a couple of years I should go out to India and meet lots more fellows like these in the college; and then I should settle down in some little station, perhaps up in the North-West Provinces, with a round of office or law work through the day, and plenty of quiet time in the evening in which to congratulate myself on having done so well and pleased all my people and secured a good position; and then I should float up and become assistant commissioner, deputy commissioner, and commissioner, and finally retire as an old man on a big screw. Eh? Something like that it would be in the future. Well, well, life in reality seemed a flat, tasteless, insipid thing; yet how it seems to glow and throb between the pages of *Shakuntala*!

I turned away from the window, restless and dissatisfied, but perfectly decided to

have as little as possible to do with the Indian.

I felt as if the chains of gratitude, admiration and interest had been already flung upon me ; very slight and delicate but still chains, and I felt there was a vague, indefinite danger in them.

I collected together what books I should want and went downstairs for the first time since my illness.

The next morning, as I lay just between sleeping and waking and dimly conscious that it was time to get up, I heard my door open softly, and, looking through my half-shut lids, I saw Chandmad standing in the doorway with a little tray of breakfast things in one hand.

She glanced at me, and I think she fancied I was asleep ; she moved noiselessly up to the bedside and set the tray on a chair by it, arranged one or two of the things in the tray and then turned to go. .

I opened my eyes wide and called to her.

She did not start at all, but came back to me with one of her brilliant smiles.

"You are awake, then? How are you? I brought your breakfast because I don't think you are strong enough to go into the college to get it."

"Why do you do so much for me?" I said, raising myself on one elbow, and speaking earnestly.

"I have a very great admiration for you," she answered simply. "I have always disliked the English character till now."

"But you must not judge of Englishmen by me at all. I am not a representative one. I am an exception in almost everything. If you want an idea of the British character, you have the whole college before you; the mass of them are ordinary young Englishmen; judge from them."

"And I don't care an atom for them," said Naranyah contemptuously. "A mass of obstinate, uncultivated swine. Yes, in spite of all their mathematics and Greek and science and what not, their minds, their thinking capacities are, it seems to me, quite undeveloped; they seem utterly incapable of sympathising with a new sentiment, opinion or idea. But you, you have a master mind. Do you know, when I came to you that first morning, and saw you lying here so quiet, and thin, and helpless, and all your rooms crowded with books, the very physic supported on your Greek grammar, and realised how you had sacrificed yourself to these ideas of learning, I felt very greatly interested in you,

in such a student. And do you remember what you muttered in your sleep over and over again?"

I shook my head.

"'Cui sit, cui sit condicio—' as if trying to follow up the thread of verse, and just on the chance, I finished the line 'dulcis, sine pulvere palmae,' and you were quite satisfied and went into a deep sleep again. Your desire was so great that even in your sleep it pursued you, and I longed so much then to help you to attain it. If I could do anything, anything, even the smallest thing, I should be so glad. Now listen, I have an idea. Eat your breakfast while I tell you. Do you take any oriental languages?"

"One," I answered.

"Which is it?"

"Sanskrit."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Quite certain," I said. "Know it as well as my own!"

"Any Indian ones?"

"I know Urdu and Gujarati a little, but I cannot take them up. Arabic is the only other one they allow."

"Let me teach you that one then," said Naranyah. "At the end of three months it shall be your best subject. It will gain for

you 500 marks or so. You shall do no work ; my brain shall work for yours and you shall have concentrated knowledge, poured into your brain for an hour every night. Let me try, will you? "

She had risen and was standing beside me, and I looked up fixedly into the lovely face, so illuminated with intelligence that it seemed merely a delicate shade round the flame of the intellectual soul that shone through from within.

"I cannot spare one instant more than an hour every night, from 8 to 9," I said slowly.

"More than enough," said Naranyah. "Now I am going, as you won't eat while I am here, and will come to you again at 8. Don't trouble to open a book or read a line in Arabic till I come. Good-bye." And she was gone before I could utter another word.

Rather more than three weeks slipped by in the uneventful, but highly strained life of intense, continuous mental work, and the Indian never failed once to come every night for the stipulated hour.

I fully expected at first that these visits would become the subject of general comment, and that I should receive a reprimand, and warning that they must be discontinued, from headquarters in the college; and I waited for

these orders with cynical indifference, thinking it would be time enough to give up Naranyah when I was forced to; but it is a curious fact that, in cases where one is prepared for scandal and gossip, it seldom springs up, at least, not in the way and with the results that one anticipates.

Naranyah came, and no one in authority interfered with us, nor apparently knew of the visits. If there was talk among the students, it did not reach me.

There was no doubt that in her coming and going Naranyah used, without in the least appearing to do so, that wily dexterity and cunning that lies ingrained in the Asiatic character, side by side with its proud, fearless independence.

She came at a time when the large, old, dingy square, in which both our colleges stood, was veiled in the shadows of approaching dusk, and passed, swiftly, like a shadow herself in her dark dress, through my door, which I had set ajar for her, and came with noiseless feet into my ground floor study.

I had the lowest flat of two rooms in the house, and, since I lived in the college, I employed no servant, except the boy who came to look after the rooms and light the fires in the early morning.

The rest of the house was occupied, but Naranyah, with seemingly unstudied skill, never encountered, nor allowed herself to be seen by the other occupants. Noiselessly, swiftly, unnoticed, she came and went.

I sternly kept to the sixty minutes only, so that the new study might make no excuse for the pleasant, easy intercourse encroaching on the WORK.

At the end of the hour, I got up and asked her to leave me, even if it were in the middle of some absorbing explanation.

One thing she would not be, and that was—punctual. I begged and implored her in vain. By eight o'clock I wound up my work and sat expecting her, and then she would not appear till half-past or a quarter to nine. At other times I would determine not to waste my time and settle down to an equation paper, and then at one minute to eight Naranyah would come in, and seemed much injured if I were not ready to begin.

I explained to her in vain that punctuality meant the greatest economy of time, but she always answered, "I can't be too much tied." And the sentence was the natural index of her restless, irregular nature.

To please me she certainly seemed to make efforts to be punctual, but then, after a night

or two, lapsed back into Asiatic irregularity. But when she was with me, she threw herself into the work, which was entirely for the benefit of another, with an enthusiasm which amazed my self-seeking mind. As she had devoted herself to my physical well-being in my illness, so she devoted herself now for my mental benefit. Her mind literally, as she had promised, worked for mine.

I held a native book in my hand and attempted to read, while Naranyah looked over my shoulder, following every line. All the words I did not know she told me, and then wrote them down like lightning on a large sheet of foolscap, with their English signification against them. This sheet, at the end of the hour, she pinned up in a conspicuous position on the wall, where my eyes must rest upon it whenever they glanced in that direction.

The next night I read the same page or pages again without help, and we took a new one together.

The intervals between the lessons were not long enough to allow any average memory to let the words slip, and all the time I must have taken, under ordinary circumstances, to hunt for them in the dictionary, was saved.

It was she, instead of I, who did the

dictionary work. Every page that I read with her she had previously analysed, made sure of the correct significance of every word, and had the whole in perfect English on her lips, ready to be transferred to my brain in a few minutes.

It must have cost her many, many minutes of hard labour, at a time when her own approaching exam. kept her constantly at work.

Moreover, the Eastern mind does not work easily at night. It is strongest in the early morning and forepart of the day, and to make any claim upon it at eight at night is to subject it to an unaccustomed strain; but then that was the time that best suited ME.

Naranyah often came to my rooms, almost white with fatigue, and the great perpendicular vein in her forehead painfully distended. She always denied with smiles that she was ill or tired, and not the faintest trace of fatigue crept into her voice or manner while she was with me; but I knew, of course, that she was tired, the same as I was tired—dead tired, but in my absorbing desire for success I refused to heed it. I was consuming and burning myself in the struggle; let all else and all others be consumed

and burn also, if by so doing they could help me!

But I did not know that every one of those pale looks, that I thought I disregarded, sank deep into my mind to fasten another rivet in the chain, which as yet lay loose upon the Ego.

I was not conscious then how much stronger the affection was growing every night that she sat beside me, with her face bending over my shoulder, and the glowing animation of her intellect and brain flowing into mine.

I had so much to do, so much to think of, and the great cloud of anxiety and nervous expectation pressed down upon me so closely as the weeks slipped on to the exam. that I had absolutely no time, nor capacity to consider anything extraneous to my work, nor be conscious of the period of gestation my soul had slowly entered upon.

I was not conscious of how much I was beginning to lean upon my sympathetic, bright, soothing co-worker, and look for comfort to her encouragement and consolation.

A man walks with a stick, but it is not till you take away the stick that he knows how much he has leant upon it.

At the end of three weeks, without any

great exertion on my part, I had made enormous progress.

"You will soon be able to do anything the examiners set now," said Naranyah to me one night, as we were finishing and looking with satisfaction on the very short list of words it had been necessary for her to write out.

"This language will be the Brahmin's crow on the palm of your exam. You know three Brahmins were once sitting in the shade of a tree, when they observed a date palm opposite that had been almost uprooted by a storm, and was on the very verge of falling, but still it stood.

"Just then, while they were looking, a crow came and alighted on the palm; and the palm being made so unsteady by the storm, immediately fell as the crow rested on it. Then the Brahmin said, 'The weight of a crow has brought down a palm.' "

"You know that story? It's an example of sophisms, like that of Achilles and the tortoise. Well now, this language will make you pass."

And she laughed. She seemed particularly merry and light-hearted this evening, and it was impossible not to feel cheered by her assured belief.

"It won't be quite so sophistical as the crow," I said, laughingly too, and putting my arm lightly round her shoulders as she sat beside me. "I owe you a tremendous deal."

Just then a knock came to the door. I dropped my arm, and said "Come in," and Naranyah looked up with the laugh still on her face as the door opened.

The little Hindu Shartri came in with a letter in his hand. He salaamed to me, and then handed the letter to Naranyah with a mutter in Gujerati that I understood to be that the letter had been put into his room.

Naranyah stretched out her hand for the letter, and one of those tremendous changes came over her face that are not uncommon in the Eastern countenance; all the gaiety and sweetness died utterly out of it, all the light and brilliance of a moment before, and a sullen, savage gloom settled upon it. She asked some questions I could not catch, to which the other nodded, and a few quick words in their own tongue passed between them; then the Hindu bowed again to me and said good-night in English, and withdrew.

Naranyah seemed to have become wholly oblivious of my presence; she tore open the envelope and began to read; as her eye fled

along each line I saw her face grow darker and darker.

The letter was in three sheets of thin, pale brownish paper and closely written all over in Gujarati, two sheets seemingly in one hand and the third in another.

When she had finished, she sat bending the paper backwards and forwards between her fingers and staring sullenly into vacancy.

"Naranyah," I said, after a pause.

She started.

"What?" she said, turning to me. And I was aghast at the effect the letter had produced; her mouth was compressed and pushed forward, and the eyes and the whole face were ablaze with savage fury.

"Have you had any bad news in that letter?" I said rather lamely.

"The letter is an Indian letter," said Naranyah, as if that explained all, putting it back in the envelope.

"Do they want you to go back?" I hazarded.

Naranyah drew a deep breath.

"They want to cage me," she muttered, "as one does a beast."

"But they can't force you to return," I said hesitatingly. "Who is it that wishes you to go back?"

"My uncle," answered Naranyah.

"Anybody else?"

"My mother," said Naranyah still more unwillingly.

"But why?" I persisted.

"You must know," said Naranyah, as if against her will. "There is a wretched man . . ." And there she stopped short.

Had I remained silent and allowed her her own time, I might have learned the truth then, though I don't think it would have made much difference to what was to happen. Still, I might have heard it. As it was, I put a silly leading question.

"That they want you to marry, I suppose?" I said, forgetting the totally different customs of the East.

Naranyah nodded and looked down at the table-cloth.

"And that you don't want to?"

Naranyah shook her head, and there was silence.

I watched her profile and saw a bright moisture rise in the dark eye, looking before her; that exquisite eye with its high arched eyebrow and arched upper lid, and the soft, dark ball of the eye itself looking out beneath.

The ferocity had died out of her face, but

she looked very wretched, and many years older than a few minutes before.

"What is it all, Naranyah?" I said.

"What is what?" she answered, folding the letter up and putting it into her breast pocket. A quiet reserve had come over her; a sort of indefinable reticence and dignity in her manner that any question seemed hopeless against.

I did not speak for the minute, and she collected the books we had been using—they were her books—and pushed her chair back and got up in silence.

She laid her hand on the back of mine, and said:

"I hope you will sleep well; don't worry about your exam. I feel sure you are safe."

I got up and looked searchingly in her face; there was an expression of repressed pain upon it, and deep down in the eyes the look of a beast that truly it would be dangerous to try and cage. I did not like to let her go like that to her own solitary room to read and ponder over that obnoxious letter alone, perhaps half through the night; she who was so intensely sympathetic with the sufferings of others, so comprehensive of the feelings of others, why should she have to bear her own in complete isolation?

On the impulse of this feeling, I made one more attempt.

"Naranyah," I said, "be frank with me, tell me what is the matter."

But to tell an Indian to be frank with you is to tell him to change the colour of his skin, or any other impossible thing. He cannot be frank, it is not in his nature.

Simplicity, directness, candour, in our sense of the word, he does not understand.

One of his "full explanations" or "confessions" is generally only an elaborate tissue of half truths, misrepresentations and suppressions.

To say to an Indian, "Be frank," is the same as to say to an Englishman, "Be sympathetic." With the best will in the world, neither can force a quality totally unnatural to them.

"I have told you," answered Naranyah, with her hand on the door; "there is nothing more to tell. Good-night." She opened the door and went, and I had to let her go.

I bit my lips in pique and vexation that she would not confide in me, but I could not help it.

I stood silent, and left her "Good-night" unanswered.

She was not a person that you could force

in the least degree; one felt that after a very short acquaintance with her. She would come to you when she pleased, and as often as she pleased; but she would not be bound to do so regularly, nor at any stated times. She would devote herself to you, as she had to me in my illness, on a generous impulse; but the moment the impulse faded from any cause, she would not feel the least compelled to continue her services, by the feeling of undertaken responsibility, which would ordinarily move an English mind under similar circumstances. She would make a great sacrifice for you if prompted by her own sympathies or sentiments, but she would not recognise that anything could constitute a right or a claim to that sacrifice.

In all her dealings with others, she expected, and simply took, perfect freedom for herself.

So it was with her moral character. I gradually and by slow degrees became convinced that Naranyah recognised and admitted none of those ordinary moral boundaries and barriers for conduct of which most minds have some, and which form the basis at least of their moral character.

Principle and duty, which prompt the good actions of most men, were mere terms

to her. Her good or kindly actions were the outcome of a tender heart and a naturally sweet, sympathetic, comprehensive character only.

And as she would not be forced by her friends, nor forced by moral considerations, so I knew now I could not force her confidence. There are people who can be worried by importunity into a confession, or moved by persuasion, but Naranyah, with perfect amiability and courtesy, would quietly elude all your enquiries and keep her reserve unbroken if she so wished, though you talked for a couple of hours.

I knew this, so I philosophically shut my door and walked back to the hearth.

"Confound her," I thought, angry with myself; "I don't care what it is. What does it matter to me?"

And I slapped up the remaining books and flung them, on the side table. But I did care somehow, and I thought about Naranyah and wondered whether she was still reading that letter, at intervals, all through a broken night.

It was a little while after this that, as the exam. was drawing near, I was obliged to give all my time to the simple revision of subjects I knew, and learn nothing fresh.

I consulted Naranyah about it and she agreed, so we gave up the hour's lesson, but I felt I could not give up Naranyah's companionship altogether, and I made her come and bring her own books to my room ; in this way we read together from about 8-30 to 9-30. Naranyah was very erratic and irregular as usual, but still she always seemed glad to be there. We seldom spoke beyond a few words, as I was too busy to care for conversation and Naranyah rarely worked for herself beyond ten o'clock.

She used to curl up in my big arm-chair and go off to sleep, but it gave me pleasure to have her by me and a sense of companionship, when I glanced up from my work, to see the firelight playing over her sleek, black head as it lay unconscious on the arm or back of the chair.

Well, my ignorance of my own state could not last, and one evening there happened what was sure to happen sooner or later, and it was a slight physical gesture of hers that brought it about.

One of these evenings we were together working. Naranyah had come to me as usual after dinner.

I was sitting at one side of the table reading 'Plautus' "Rudens" and she was

opposite me studying Fraser's "Anatomy." Between us stood a small, flat, tobacco tray, holding some cigarettes.

My hands were both lying idly above the edge of my book, playing with a pencil I used to mark obsolete words with.

As I raised my eyes a little in turning over a leaf I saw Naranyah's hand move gently with a slow, sliding movement with the back on the table-cloth towards where mine lay by my book.

I drew my own suddenly away.

"What has your hand come there for?" I asked, staring at the smooth, upturned palm and the fingers half curled over it.

Naranyah looked up from her "Anatomy."

"It came there because yours was there; it was an instinct," Naranyah answered in a low tone, leaving it there and going on with her reading.

I did not put mine back. I was afraid. I read on by force to the very last line of the "Rudens," and then, without closing the book or making any movement, I silently raised my eyes to the figure opposite me.

It was absorbed and motionless. The hand I had rejected had crumpled itself up a little nearer the "Anatomy." She was leaning on the other elbow, and her head was resting

on her hand. The first finger had sunk into the thick black hair, the other three threw a shade over the face, but the gas light fell directly on the small head and the curve of warm, brown neck.

I looked, and my heart seemed to leap up in a hot flood of emotion for one instant and then sink like a stone.

The dignity, the repose, the abstraction in that attitude !

I, sitting in my place, felt so infinitely little, so small, so below her, and worse, perhaps, so far away. I, after all, was nothing to her ; I had no hold, no claim upon her.

An unsatisfied, hungry craving filled me to give some outward sign, to make some demonstration of the feelings struggling within me, to make clear to herself how great her influence was over me. A longing came upon me to give some touch, some caress.

I hungered to extend my hand and close it over the warm, inert fingers before me ; but then the unconsciousness, the calm of the figure checked me and held me motionless. I looked, and remained immovable.

What a keen delight to open my heart freely and fully to her, to reveal it to her in one swift moment ! But was I sure ? Was I ready to pass the barrier of silence ?

At this moment I was independent, free, my own master at least of my sorrows and suffering thoughts. If I chose, all could be crushed down, buried, and none need ever guess that my stoic calm had been shaken by the weakness of a sweet human affection.

Words once uttered could never be recalled, and now at the last moment my soul, in the throes of indecision, fainted and trembled in its terror-stricken panic.

The sweat broke out slowly on my forehead. I felt the blood rising and distending the veins in my temples and beating in my ears, and at last, unconsciously, a groan burst from my lips.

Naranyah raised her head with a startled movement and looked at me, the expression of concern I knew so well came into the dark eyes, and she said something that only came as a confused murmur to my ears. The blood rushed in a burning flood over my face as I met her questioning look, and with another groan I laid my head down on the open "Rudens."

I heard her rise and push back her chair and come round to mine, and then stand by me. There was silence, except for the sing-sing of the gas above our heads, and

then I felt a gentle hand steal round my collar.

"What is it? What is the matter?" was breathed in my ear, the tones so low they hardly seemed to break the air.

I flung my head back and looked up into her eyes—those brilliant orbs, deep wells of living light—and my keen, thirsty gaze ravaged them to their depths.

"My soul is in travail, Naranyah," I said bitterly.

"Yes? With what?" she answered gently.

"A new desire," I answered.

"Can I help to deliver the soul?"

I closed my eyes.

"Yes, as Hephæstus delivered Zeus—a hatchet to cleave this," and I pressed my hand to my head. "No other way."

There was no answer.

Her silence stung me to desperation. I sprang up and laid my hand on her chest, forcing her back to the door.

"You are a disturbing influence here," I said, harshly pressing her through the door.

She made no resistance. I drew the door to and locked it.

I was alone. Alone, yet not alone, for my brain seemed to be some separate and co-ordinate existence, and, convulsed in a

straining longing after the companionship and fellowship of another, it demanded furiously of me, in the stillness, like a living voice, why I had thrust away its associate.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SEAL.

THE next morning I awoke late and with a confused sense that something—something had happened.

I turned my eyes to the window, and as the flood of cold daylight met them the clear remembrance of the previous night came back upon my mind.

Clearly revealed before me at last had stood out the affection that had grown up so quietly within me. Last night in horror and dismay the Ego had woken with a struggle to find itself chained and helpless, bowed to the will and caprice of another.

My pleasure, my peace of mind, lay no longer in the abstract of knowledge, and no longer in the success that I could work to win, but in the soft hollow of a human hand.

The thirst for companionship had replaced

the thirst for knowledge; the pleasure in the living voice had superseded that in the quiet pages. The abstracts I had worshipped had suddenly taken a concrete form, and as I had loved them before, so I loved them now, but the abstracts I could make my own, their concrete form—never.

The feet would depart elsewhither, the brain would forget me, the face would vanish from my eyes, the voice fade from my ears, and—I thought furiously in that first moment—with them all the pleasure of my life.

With a horror of the clear, placid light of day I turned my eyes from it and buried them in the pillow with a nameless despair.

How little worth my work seemed, how little worth the success or position in life, how poor the admiration, envy or commendation of others in comparison with this passion for one other human being!

This, this was the real joy in life.

A desert, a swamp,\* a garret, a prison, shared with Naranyah, seemed to glow with tempting attractiveness. An empire, and all the brilliance life can give, without her seemed one flat, long ennui—Suleyman's Empire without Ibrahim.

And it was an impossible thing, it was madness, it was hopeless to suppose I could

retain Naranyah for long, even as a common friend.

In letters of fire on my wall last night had seemed to burn the word—"Insanity."

When she returned to India, Naranyah would return to her own state, to her family, her ties, her duties, her own mode of life, and I, if I went to India as a Civil Servant, I might be stationed anywhere: up on the frontier of Afghanistan, or beyond the Ganges. Besides, though the same continent might hold us both, totally different forms of existence would swallow each of us and utterly sever us one from the other. And it seemed as if I, at least, were bound to accept the form cut out for me.

I was young, I had no profession, no influence, no money. Till I entered the Service, I was dependent on my father. When I entered the Service, I should be dependent upon it.

But even granted that I was free and untied, Naranyah herself, what were her feelings?

I saw her, the realisation, the positive incarnation of all that I loved and admired, as something I had never thought to find in a living human form. But she, what did she feel for me?

In bright and clear review her conduct

to me, her actions, looks and words passed before me.

How kind and sympathetic she had always been to me! That searching, affectionate look if I seemed more than usually ill; that eager desire to help me; that smile of pleasure if ever we chanced to meet unexpectedly; that tender, gentle manner when we were together; how much or how little did it mean?

It might be that, at the first, intense pity, such as was natural to her, for any thing or person who stood in need of it, had sprung up for one who was obviously overworked and ill; it might be that later she was flattered and attracted by the admiration which probably showed itself unconsciously in my eyes whenever they fell upon her; it might be that she felt that in all England there was not one man from whom she could be so sure of understanding, not one to whom she could express a sentiment, or idea, and be so sure of comprehension as myself; it might be that Naranyah felt so much, but not enough to make her willing to avoid separation at all costs, even if I were.

And I, with all my strange, wild attraction to her, was I even willing to? No, impos-

sible, surely not ; and that is what to keep Naranyah with me would mean, a complete renunciation of all else.

For us to follow out our respective lives side by side, in the companionship of each other, was an impossibility.

Well I knew it now ; my independence was wholly gone so far as my personal contentment, my happiness was concerned ; at the mercy of her fancy, to go, or to come, or to stay near me, to be pleased or displeased, to be affectionate or cold, rested my peace.

It had been revealed to me the secret of the happiness of life, it had been shown to me that it did not lie in success, in knowledge, in flattered vanity, nor in soothed ambition, but in the companionship of another, and that other, The Adored, The Idol that has a shrine in one's heart, where none other can ever penetrate.

Like a flash of vivid light, like an inspiration it had come upon me last night—"Here is the satisfaction you have always craved, here is the rest and peace, the appeasement of the vague hunger and thirst, the soothing feeling of serene contented happiness within that makes all external circumstances of no account here, and here alone, it exists—in the mutual devotion of two kindred minds."

And as my delighted vision feasted on the bright glow of kindling happiness, a black screen had been drawn before it—"Not for you, never, never, never, for you, Naranyah can be nothing for you but an acquaintance and a memory ; circumstances and fashion are too strong for you."

The light that Naranyah had brought into my life had gone out last night, and all was blacker than before. Impossible, Impossible, Impossible, seemed written all round me.

Well, happiness was done with ; duty remained, and should be done.

I got up and dressed slowly, feeling frightfully ill. As I passed before the glass, I looked curiously at the reflection in the clear, bright light ; the face and lips were white, and under the bloodshot eyes lay two large purple hollows which shot their livid shade far down into the cheek, and to me the whole face seemed lined and seamed with the passions of last night. •

"Shall I last ?" I thought gloomily, looking keenly at the reflection. "I must ; why was all this violence of feeling infused in my organisation ? If I cared less about everything I should not be in the state I am."

I closed my razors and put them aside ; my hand was too unsteady to attempt to shave.

I finished dressing and went out.

That evening how differently I felt from former ones, when I hurried over my dinner, and with a quick, eager step hastened back to my room to find Naranyah there, perhaps, already, ensconced in my arm-chair. No one would be waiting for me to-night.

I lingered in the hall talking with the others after dinner, and my feet slowly lagged along the dark street to my room. The door stood open, and the room was black and empty. I went in, lighted up the gas and settled to work. No one came. "Better so," I thought. Perfect silence reigned all round me. For the first hour I half expected Naranyah would come as usual, then when that had passed and I realised that I had really offended her and driven her away from me, an incredible sense of loss came over me. How intensely quiet it was, too! And I was alone, shut in with my books, and I must work; every minute must be filled now; I must not rest, for in the time I was resting something might be learned that would turn the scale in the exam.; there was no escape from the gloomy pressure; it was all round me, and now I bore it *alone*. Well, come what might, I must work, the exam. was not far off.

I dragged Thucydides in front of me, and tried to go on with an unfinished speech, but the page, with its thin, pale blue lines, seemed to rise close to my eyes; a cutting circular pain, as if a tight band of iron were being drawn still tighter round my head, made me involuntarily put my hands up to it. I could see and understand nothing. I got up and took a turn up and down the room to let the pain subside, which it did the moment the overcharged brain had a second's rest. But how could I rest? Thucydides was there, waiting to be done; the exam. was to be passed.

I seemed to see my father's cold face in the distance, to hear the sneers that would await me if I failed. The mad longing to be my own master, to be independent, to be no longer subject to a father who had no gratitude to his son's steady work, no appreciation of his son's gifts; above all, no pity for human weakness, no sympathy for human ill luck, no mercy on a failure, came over me. Spurred by the galley slave's yearning for emancipation, I seized the book again and read on, letting the pain cut down through the forehead and shoot in the eyeballs.

"A little longer, a little longer to keep up, and then . . ." And somehow, wretched

though I was, still, half obliterating the pitiless face of my father, rose another vision, a lovely intellectual face, all sweetness and sympathy and unspeakable pity; somewhere in my aching brain I seemed to hear a voice murmuring:—

“Success or failure, I shall always understand, always sympathise,” and it soothed me. I worked on.

Days passed, and Naranyah and I were as beings dead to each other. I never saw her, never met her; she must have systematically avoided me. I longed intensely to see her again; I missed her enormously. Evening after evening as I sat alone the inexpressible, unspeakable craving to have her with me for one minute came over me so strongly that I pushed back my chair and started up to go to her; a few steps only, a few minutes and I could find her. But no, to what end? I controlled myself always, summoned my quiet reason and self-command, and restrained the desire to seek her. I kept a close, continuous pressure on myself to consider only my work, a close, unbroken control over even my innermost thoughts. The weather grew warmer and brighter now each day, and I had more hours of daylight to work in.

The Easter vacation came and went, and I stopped on through it.

As the spring advanced and brought the exam. nearer, a calmer, quieter feeling came over me, a sense almost of exultation.

Soon now the decision would be here and over. I felt, too, that I had done all that human brains and energy could do; that I knew my subjects to their very lowest depths and loftiest heights; the conviction came upon me overwhelmingly sometimes when I commenced to read and felt how thoroughly I was master of the book already—"Surely I must pass."

By dint of constant occupation and the continual presence of the idea of the coming test, and the rigid exclusion of all other thoughts when they strove to force themselves upon me, the feelings for Naranyah sank into a dull pain, a flattening, deadening sense of the *tedium vitæ* through the day, but at night, when the strain of the work was taken off, and I knew at least five hours must be spared for rest, they came back upon me in furious gusts.

"Where was she? What was she doing? What did she think of me? What was it in her that attracted me?" And all sorts of other queries danced through and through my brain.

I rarely slept except by the aid of a dose of potassium bromide. Oddly enough, I had got a bottle of it from Naranyah, who had recommended it to me as a thing she took herself. Anyone who has taken it for long knows the miserable and depressing effects it has upon body and mind. The doctor persuaded me to give it up, and wrote a prescription for a sleeping draught instead; I took it, but it produced no effect. I had a worse night than ever, and as a lesser evil than insomnia resorted to the bromide again. Looking back, I always wonder how I got through those weeks without a breakdown; it was a triumph of will. The extreme anxiety and constant work combined wasted every atom of flesh that could be spared; all colour left the face, and the hands shook so that at times it was with difficulty I could write at all legibly; but still I remained perfectly able to meet all my work, and all those who daily expected to see me break down were daily disappointed to see me come amongst them active and determined and hard working as ever.

In fact, as the time passed I grew brighter and calmer, more satisfied with myself, and I think they noticed it. It was one lovely April evening that I closed my Integral

Calculus and pushed away my papers with this feeling of satisfaction, and thought I would walk round the garden for a few minutes' relaxation.

I filled up my pipe and lighted it, thrust both hands into my trousers' pockets, and stepped down on to the lawn in the fresh air, for it is fresh in April in London sometimes.

I walked down the grass alongside the red brick wall, and then by the hedge of trimmed holly which formed a continuation to it.

When I was about half way down, I heard voices on the other side, and then through the still evening air came sharply on my ears :—

"Said she was the best looking woman he'd seen, a d——d blackamoor. Did you ever hear such tommy rot as that?" And another voice answered :—

"Well, I don't know. I don't like a black skin any more than you do, but still, if you once get over that, she is devilishly handsome."

I guessed at once whom they were discussing: it was Naranyah. I continued my walk, but apparently the fellows on the other side were walking too, as I heard the other

reply with expostulatory, contemptuous discontent :—

“But surely—a black—can’t be good looking !”

“Ah, by the way,” broke in the other, “do you know what the split was between her and Heath? He was so very thick with her at one time.”

“Don’t know, I am sure. Heath insulted her in some way, I fancy, or she thought herself insulted; they are frightfully touchy, those Indians. It is a funny business any way. Heath is pining for her I should think; I never saw a fellow look so awfully ill and wretched as he does.”

“Well,” came the light, chaffing answer, “there’ll be nothing left for him to do but to hang himself to the bed-post now she is going.”

Going! It fell like a sword-stroke upon me.

“Oh, she’s going, is she? I haven’t heard. When?”

“I don’t know; fortnight, I think. She has no object here now, she says, now her exam. is over.”

“No, lucky creature; I wish mine were,” with a groan. “Going back to India, I suppose?”

“Yes. You know she passed with lots

of honours and commendations, and I don't know what all. I'm not sure she didn't get a medal. I had no notion these Indians were so clever as they are; we are simply nowhere beside them in point of intellect, that's flat. Do you know last year in the Indian Civil Service list that the four first places were taken by natives? There was Chatterjie and——"

I turned away from the hedge and cut straight across the lawn. I hardly knew what I was doing; my heart seemed beating in my throat, a thick, yellowish mist rose before my eyes; there was one clamouring desire, one blind, wild impulse in me to find Naranyah and to speak.

She was going, the one human being whom I had met that I could admire, respect, worship, and I might never see her again.

Once merged in the intricate mazes of native life, I, as an Englishman, might never be able to penetrate to her, and in any case there would never be the same unrestrained, free, equal intercourse, as here, of two fellow-students—never.

I sprang through the open glass door into my room, flung my cold pipe on the table, and crossed to the door into the passage;

with my fingers on the handle of the hall door I paused. How should I be received? The words, "or she thought herself insulted," came back upon me. True; what had Naranyah been thinking of me all this time? Was she hopelessly offended? Should I be received with the look her Indian letter had been? When her eyes lighted upon me, should I see the flash of contemptuous scorn in them, and be heard in cold silence? Very likely; and it would be what I deserved. Mean, egotistical, cowardly hound that I had been!

Still there was that feeling of enthusiastic devotion for Naranyah, that acknowledgment of superiority in her, that made me feel I would accept and submit to any treatment at her hands—that, so far from a humiliation of myself from her being galling to me to remember, I should be glad to feel that she had had the vain pleasure and triumph of seeing another at her feet.

Yes, I would go. One thing I knew—Naranyah would understand. Everything that I told her or admitted to her she would comprehend

I opened the door and walked quietly along to the medical college, with a sea of mad emotion surging in my heart. As I walked

I met an Indian student coming from the direction of the laboratory which was attached to the cottage buildings. I stopped him.

"Can you tell me where I shall find Nurse Chandmad?" I said. He gave a backward motion of the hand.

"Yes, I have just left her there in the laboratory. Is anything the matter?"

"No," I answered quickly. "Why?"

"Because your face is the colour of this," the Indian said, tapping a sheet of writing paper he held in his hand. I merely laughed and hurried on.

When I came to the door of the laboratory, I turned the handle noiselessly and opened it without a sound.

The two large windows of the room facing the door stood wide open, and through them came a faint, pale light from the clear, transparent, greenish evening sky; where I was and both ends of the room were already lost in shadow. By the farthest window stood a group of about seven women students; they were all close together, and it was rapidly growing dusk, but I recognised the figure of Naranyah amongst them, as I should have recognised it amongst a thousand. She was standing sideways to the window, slightly

supporting herself against the framework, and talking with the others. My eyes, looking greedily out from the darkness, could take in every detail : the incomparable grace and dignity of the form, the natural ease of the attitude, the line of the spirited head. How I worshipped her in that moment ! How I felt that all I possessed, or might possess, would be too little to pour at her feet in return for a smile ! How I felt I would go forward to her, cut open every beating vein, and let my blood pour out before her, merely to excite the sweet look of sympathy and feel it was for me !

And I had possessed both smiles and sympathy, freely given to me without cost, and then I had not known their value, and repulsed them, forfeited them for the sake of that infernal work.

Well, at least she should know now what I felt and had been feeling. I was anxious that at least she should have the flattery and the pleasure of knowing how much and how deeply I had been struck with her.

I would wait now till I could see her alone, and then she should hear the truth.

She talked on with the others ; they seemed eager to listen, and the group closed tighter round her. From what I heard it seemed

some question of Anatomy, which had been the subject of the afternoon's class.

One of the greatest charms Naranyah possessed was her entire unconsciousness of self; her manner to others was always natural and careless; amiable and courteous as she always was, she still gave you the impression of being reserved, self-reliant, and completely indifferent to the opinion of others about herself or her actions. As she stood now, there was not the faintest trace of a desire to pose to her audience.

It grew darker, and I waited, and at last the group moved and loosened, and I saw Naranyah come out from the window.

"If you get that question," I heard her say, "and put down that answer, you will be all right."

"Aren't you coming with us?" I heard one of them ask.

"No, I have something to do first; I will follow you." She went as she spoke to one of the sets of shelves where the chemicals were kept, either to take out or replace a bottle, and the others, still talking interestedly among themselves, crossed the room.

As it happened, chance had favoured me; they would go, and I should be left with her; none of them noticed me as they passed,

standing motionless in the shadow a little on one side of the door.

On the other side of me jutted out a sink and tap of water, which was used by the students for washing out bottles or rinsing glasses, etc., used in the chemistry. They passed down towards the door.

"She knows her Anatomy like anything; there's no mistake about that," someone said as they went into the passage, where the gas was still unlighted; the door closed, and I heard their retreating footsteps and voices going away down the passage.

Then all was silence, and I was alone with the Other in the dim room, with no witness but the pale, calm sky beyond. A faint, cool air came across to me, a tiny click of glass from the shelves in the further corner reached my ears; still I hesitated to go forward. I don't know how many minutes might have elapsed, and then suddenly she passed out of the shade in front of the window again, and crossed the room with the quick, easy step and the erect carriage that my eyes delighted in.

As she came down to the door to follow the others, I advanced a step forward from the shadow; my heart beat to suffocation, my voice died away in my throat, for the

moment I could not utter a word. I stretched out two quivering hands towards her imploringly. She drew back as the two thin, white, spectre-like hands barred her progress, and stood still ; there was no contempt, no anger.

"Francis?" I heard her say, and through the gloom I saw her lips part and the gleam of her white teeth and the familiar smile light up the whole face.

"Can I do anything for you?" Always her first thought!

She took one of my extended hands, and pressed it between her own soft palms.

"Yes; don't go," I said faintly. "Wait. I want to speak to you."

"I am not going," she answered, stepping back a little, and half seating herself on the stone ledge behind her. "What is it?"

Then suddenly my voice came back to me.

Under the force and pressure of the knowledge that she was going away, and that this might be my last chance of speaking freely to her, all hesitation, all concealment vanished, and all that had been in my thoughts, on and since our last evening together, poured from my lips in one eager, burning stream.

The keynote of it all was my admiration for herself, my wish that our friendship could be

permanent, and the fear of the hopelessness of it, that had made me rank her amongst disturbing influences.

And to it all Naranyah listened without interruption, leaning motionless before me.

I wonder how often a confession has been checked, either at its opening or in its course, by something in the person to whom it is made; but here everything in Naranyah excited, tempted, allured, and made easy the reckless outpour of impulsive words.

The beauty in every line of the face and form, the sweetness of the expression, the entire absence of the faintest trace of self-consciousness or conceit—I was led on and on, and then, suddenly alarmed at her perfect silence, I stopped abruptly.

“Naranyah, have I offended you?”

I leant also on the stone, and put one hand down on the ledge to lean forward and try to look into her eyes. She shook her head.

“Not at all, not at all,” she murmured.

I could not tell exactly the effect my words had produced upon her, but I felt they had excited her; I saw her fingers tremble and her eyes flash under the dark lashes.

“You are going to India?” I asked, putting the desperate, decisive question, and waiting feverishly.

"Who told you that?" Naranyah asked hastily, raising her eyes and looking me full in the face, and then instantly dropping them.

"I heard it," I said, impatient of her prevarications. "Are you going?"

There was a long silence, then in a low tone came the answer—"Not if you wish me to stay."

"If I wish it! After all I have said!" I said vehemently.

"I care for nothing else, position, profession, money, family, let them all go if I can keep you with me," and I felt it at that moment.

"I must pass the exam. now; that is a fixed duty, but I care about nothing else. If you go I care for nothing, not even that. But can you stay?"

"I will see," Naranyah said, passing the back of her hand in a tired way across her forehead. "I will do all I can; but if I am not tied you are. You are going to India yourself very soon."

I groaned.

"I know. Oh, when I think of all these things and the circumstances! And there seems no way out of them. Am I bound to go into this cursed Indian Service? . . . God! I might as well be a slave." I buried my face in my hands and groaned again.

"Don't distress yourself with all these things now," said Naranyah hastily, and with a tone of anxious pain in her voice.

"You have merely to work for your exam. in the present. After, all shall be arranged as you wish. I will stay until you have passed in any case. Don't worry yourself about it."

"But if I break up your plans now," I said desperately, "and prevent your going . . . then . . . then . . . if after all I am obliged to take up an appointment myself . . ."

"Do you think I should stand for a moment in your way?" Naranyah said very earnestly. "That is what I am prepared for; the successful candidate may think differently from the overstrung student. I don't want you to make any promise. In the future you shall act as you think best then."

"But I can't ask you to stay for me unless I had some fixed plans . . . was certain that I could . . . should be able . . ."

"You do not ask me," Naranyah interrupted. "I stay because I wish it. You have no responsibility in any way. I should never have arranged to leave England just now but for what you said to me that night,

When I wrote to my uncle, saying I would return, I thought I was merely an evil influence and that I could do you no good, perhaps harm; but now, after all you have told me, I stay—not because you ask it, but because I wish to. I am simply gratifying myself.”

I was silent, meanly and basely, and like a coward I accepted the generous sophistry and left myself untied, because I did not see what the future could possibly bring, except separation, but it was a respite that she would not go then and I clung to it.

“Now, pray, don’t worry,” Naranyah continued. “Do you quite understand? When and while you want me, I shall stay. When my presence becomes the least anxiety to you, I shall withdraw to my own life, always to remember you as one who . . .” She broke off, and then continued. “But never to see you again, unless you wish.”

Then she added in a low voice, sad and restrained, suited to the strange, suppressed excitement of the moment :—

“However circumstances may remove you from me, I shall always be the same; your friend now in this period of trial, and in the end your faithful friend for life, always

ready to serve you if possible, to come to you if summoned, and to cease existence with you, even if far away."

I leant forward towards her, every pulse beating wildly with tremulous expectation; a wild, delightful pleasure filling and overflowing my excited brain.

"Naranyah, why, why should you say all this? What are your own feelings?"

Naranyah raised her head suddenly, and lifted her glowing eyes, like a flash of fire, to my face bent over her.

"Francis," she said passionately, throwing away all reserve and restraint, "you must know I am devoted to you."

And then suddenly a mad impulse came upon me and with it a divine inspiration that here, now, in the presence of this other soul, which was in fact a part merely of my own, I need no longer control, break down and trample on the urging impulse, the wild, resistless instinct; I felt that the time, the season, the opportunity, the use for self-control had passed, I might, I could, I ought to yield.

And this is delight, to yield not against one's principle, not carried by passion over the boundaries of duty or self-respect, as in following some base desire, but to feel

and know and realise that there can be no boundaries, that they melt, dissolve and vanish, unneeded, before an impulse absolutely pure.

In the darkness of the quiet room, where we were face to face with each other, and saw and recognised and knew each other's souls, I threw one arm round her neck in unhindered, delirious madness, drawing her close to my breast, and pressed a long, silent, unresisted kiss upon her lips.

It was the seal of the agreement of all we had promised each other.

The falling of the veil between us.

As my burning, quivering lips touched hers, a glowing current of fresh fever rushed through me, and I felt a convulsive tremor pass over the delicate frame I held. It seemed in that moment the souls were transfused the one into the other, that the essence of her life poured through her soft, half-opened, fluttering lips deep into my thirsty being, and in turn some power, some vigour, some essential constituent of my organisation went out from me in that kiss, given and received in a holy fervour of enthusiasm and self-renunciation. In it and by it I was purified from my life of hateful self-concentration.

By it my egoism lay slain for ever.

She withdrew herself from me after those few brief seconds.

I extended my arms, but only to the dark emptiness. I dared not follow her, as I had not dared to restrain nor constrain her by my grasp.

I knew there was a door at the other end of the long black room, and I felt rather than heard her feet retreating to it.

I blindly stretched out my hand to the door handle, turned it, and stumbled into the brightly lighted corridor, a glow of passionate happiness in every vein, and my brain reeling like a drunken man's.

The warm, living form seemed still to quiver at my bosom, the delicate head seemed still lying back upon my arm.

I walked without feeling my feet touch the ground, all my bodily senses seemed gone from me.

I felt as if I lived, had been absorbed in that other soul I had just seen.

As I made my way along the passage, students were coming up it from the lecture-room, talking:—

“He had a scrape to get through, hadn't he?”

“Yes, I should think so; failed three times for the Intermediate.”

The words reached my dazed brain through its confusion.

I was in the practical, selfish, everyday world again. The world of exams., of success and failure, surrounded by hard, sober, practical minds, and I, too, was one of them surely?

I had my work also, my cut-out duties, my place and station in life to attain.

My egoism, my worldliness came slowly creeping back upon me like a cold hand dispelling the higher, enthusiastic mental fervour of a moment back.

The world of ecstatic feeling, of intense emotion, and the wild exultation of madness I had just fallen from, where was it? What was it? A chimera? It seemed so, as it vanished more and more from my mental vision as I stood in the college passage. I went on to meet the others, and my self-command came back to me.

"Hullo, Heath, here you are!" exclaimed one of them, breaking from the advancing quintette. "You are the very fellow I want. Show me this beastly problem, for goodness sake. No one can make head or tail of it:—If  $\alpha$  minus  $\beta$  and  $\beta$  are the angles made by the straight line  $AB$  at the point  $B$ , on the curve whose equation is  $X \dots \dots$ ."

"Give me the book," I said interrupting him.

He handed me the book with a sigh of relief.

He was an honest, hard-working British student of about eighteen, with a shock of sandy hair that he had been ruffling up now in despair over the problem, and a flushed, hot face with two puffed swellings under the eyes from overwork and too much smoke.

I was sorry for him, as I knew he was slaving to the utmost to satisfy his people, and had not the ghost of a chance for his exam.

I glanced down the page, my brain still half in the clouds, and the others stood round.

"I think I can do it," I said, "but there is no place to draw the figure here."

"Well, come on to the laboratory," he said eagerly. "There's a table there, and we can light up the gas."

I assented, and we all moved on together.

"I think old Burstled (Burstled was the under mathematical master) is going off his head," said one of the fellows across me to his friend. "He got awfully mixed over a question the other day, and now he made a muddle of this and then said all that

rotten twaddle about the book not being reliable."

I listened with a strange feeling that deepened as we got up to the laboratory door and all pressed into the silent room, the others continuing their careless, slangy talk.

One of them lighted up a gas jet, and I took a chair to the long table in the centre and sat down in a dream. Which, which is the reality, I asked myself, as I mechanically drew the figure, with the knot of fellows looking on, the flaring gas jet over my head, and just behind my chair the very spot where, not five minutes ago, Naranyah and I had stood clasped in each other's arms.

Mathematics were not naturally my strong point, but hours and hours of persistent labour had given me ease and familiarity with them. I got out the right solution of the question and handed the book and paper back to their owner.

"That agrees," I said, "and I think you'll be able to follow it; I have put down all the steps."

"Oh, thanks awfully," he said with honest gratitude, too thankful to get the thing done to think of anything else; but the others looked at me with spiteful enviousness.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WAR.

FROM that evening Naranyah and I saw little more of each other than before. She was engrossed in her nursing work and I absorbed in mine for the exam. But I did not care now. I think I was half mad through that time; at least, not mad, for madness pre-supposes a certain amount of diseased tissue, but in a sort of mental delirium, and in spite of all that marred it, I drew a wild, seductive pleasure from it. Since that night in the chemistry room where I had heard the short, simple sentence that meant so much from her lips, I had felt, not content, but at least more confident. I shut out resolutely from my thoughts the adverse circumstances.

Since I had looked into her mind and seen the unison there with mine, an elation had come over me. I knew the force and

will and violence of her character, and I knew my own; against these two united the waves of surrounding circumstances would break in vain.

And I worked splendidly, ten times better than ever in my life before or since.

My tutor even noticed it. One night I went back to receive some papers he had set me and that I had written out for his correction.

He gave them into my hand and looked hard at me.

"Heath," he said, "you are surpassing yourself! You have been better lately, haven't you? A lot depends on one's health, doesn't it? I suppose this great improvement is due to that?"

And I answered "Yes" to all three queries, but it was a lie. The new power within me was due to Naranyah and my inward pleasure; the pleasure, and it is supreme pleasure though, all else be against one, of knowing that the loved one loves.

On the morning after the meeting in the laboratory I had almost shrunk from seeing her.

I had half expected that when we first met afterwards there would be that constraint, that awkwardness, that embarrassment that

risers between two people after a mutual revelation of feeling.

We must all of us know, I think, the look of half embarrassed shame that comes over a virtuous woman's face when she meets her lover's eyes after their first kiss.

And, somehow, for me by any act of mine to have called such a look to the proud, careless face of Naranyah, when she met my eyes, would have filled me with horror. I dreaded unconsciously something of the sort. I need not have done.

Where we did meet was in the street, just as I was going into college. It was filled with the bright morning sunlight and crowded with students. She passed me in the full blaze of the sunshine. I felt the blood rise slightly to my own face, and my feet stopped mechanically of themselves as I caught sight of her.

In the same minute she turned her head, and our eyes met.

And I realised that there was perfect daylight between us. There was not the faintest trace of confusion nor embarrassment in her eyes as her glance shot straight across the others to me, only a great understanding, and the blood flowed back in a joyful excited stream to my heart. We two had a

separate existence above our ordinary life in and for the other ; we had a world between us into which none of these who stood round us could penetrate, a magnetism of mind to mind, a mental tie invisible, impalpable, but irresistible, which not one perhaps of these men present would be able to understand. I was an exception perhaps and she was an exception, but we had met and we knew and understood each other, and nothing else mattered to either of us.

“ Quis det legem amantibus ?  
Major lex est Amor sibi.”

About seven weeks before the exam., on one splendid, sunny afternoon, I passed by the house where Naranyah had her room and saw her leaning out of the open window, her chin on her hands, and the sun shining down on her. I paused and looked up.

“ I came to know what you are going to do this afternoon,” I said. “ It’s Saturday, you know ; there won’t be any lectures, nor anything going on. In fact, I suppose the college will be half empty ; the fellows will all go somewhere, I should think, on such a day.”

Naranyah nodded.

"What are you going to do yourself?" she asked.

"I? Why, what do I ever do but work?" I said, laughing and leaning my hand on the low sill. Naranyah looked down at it thoughtfully for a long time, as if she were counting the bones and the veins and the strings of muscles, all of which were distinctly visible.

"I merely meant, did you want me to come anywhere with you?" she said very gently, at last looking up at me. "Do, Francis, come out; it would do you so much good. Come out for a short walk with me."

I looked back at her with a smile.

"I can't possibly; I have too much to do. But you are going out, I suppose?"

"Do you think I could, knowing you were here working? Let us take a turn round the square together."

She came out, and we went into the quiet square behind the college and crossed slowly over to the poplars. There was not a single soul apparently about the place except ourselves. As I had said, the college seemed deserted; it was a still, quiet afternoon, the leaves only faintly stirring on the poplars as the sun streamed through them on to the grass.

We turned down beside them under their light, wavering shade, and I put my arm round Naranyah's neck, with that sense of delighted pleasure I never knew except with her. We talked a little about indifferent things as we strolled up and down, and then, on a sudden impulse, I said:

"Have you had any more Indian letters lately? Are they worrying you?"

"They don't worry me," returned Naranyah, "but they are always the same things—'Why are you not coming back? When are you coming? We thought you would have come long ago.'"

"But you don't take any notice of them?" I said.

"No, not now," replied Naranyah, with a shade of the old reserve.

"And that man they want you to marry," I continued. "Have they found anyone else for him yet?"

"Francis!" said Naranyah passionately, "how could you bring up this subject, just when I was so content and had forgotten it all!"

I was taken by surprise. I glanced at her, and saw a gust of rage had come over her face.

"I am sorry," I said involuntarily. "What have I done?"

"You have reminded me of what they have done, and what I am," said Naranyah gloomily; "that I am here in England . . . a wreck."

I laughed. I could not help it. To hear a young girl of seventeen, in the first flush of youth and health, call herself a wreck seemed too funny. I said something of the sort to her, looking at her and putting it in the most flattering manner.

"It is true, though," said Naranyah, turning her eyes away.

"Well, but tell me. Why? How? What is the matter?" I said most gently and most persuasively.

"Not now, Francis," she answered, leaning her head back on my arm and ruffling her silky black hair up against my shoulder. "I am too happy to wish to think about these things. Some day perhaps—— I would do anything you asked me, you know; but don't let us worry ourselves about anything just now. I am very happy in the present through you. I feel like some parasite creeper gaining its sustenance and nourishment through the life of another."

I looked down into the dark, smiling,

swimming eyes, and saw there the "Love's reflected image, love returned" of Plato. For the moment we were totally oblivious of everything except the other, in the quiet, sunny walk, with the murmur of the fluttering leaves above our heads. We lost sense of everything, except the other's eyes. And then suddenly, without our having heard a step or a sound in that rapt moment, two students brushed past us, walking up themselves arm-in-arm. They passed, and then one turned his head over his shoulder and looked back at us with a derisive mockery in his eyes.

"A second Justinian with his pretty Theodora," he said slowly with a sneer, nominally to his companion; but the words reached me distinctly, and they passed on. They did not turn round nor look back again; they went straight on and got lost to sight amongst the laurel bushes at the end.

We were both startled, and I was rather vexed; I had certainly thought we were alone, but we were too deeply interested each in the other to care or heed much or attach any importance to a passing jest or sneer.

I glanced back to see if there were any others in the direction they had come up

behind us, and then we continued our walk as before to the end of the alley; we made no comment on it to the other. I saw Naranyah's eyes follow the retreating figures with a meditative, reflective look for a second or two, and then she turned to me again.

"There is no one, not one single soul," she said, continuing the thread of our thoughts, "who has any claim upon me, nor anyone who has a right to interfere with me, nor one single living being for whom I feel one ten thousandth fraction of what I feel for you. There may be people who will separate you from me, but there are none who can separate me from you. You believe me, Francis?"

And I believed her, and I said so.

Lost in a sense of dreamy beatitude, we walked up and down the short, sunny path, careless of the past or the future or the surroundings.

No one else came to disturb us; we were left to each other in peace and quietness, and I went into dinner a little later in a fool's paradise.

The next six weeks passed without anything outwardly to mark them.

I had a very great deal to suffer in point of health, but Naranyah's increasing tender-

ness to me when we did meet, though we saw each other so little, more than compensated me for any amount of suffering.

Whatever her troubles were, they did not seem to weigh upon her as my anxieties weighed upon me; at times she would look unspeakably wretched and harassed, but the look would pass off, and give way again to the natural brightness.

She possessed an unconscious, careless gaiety of character, and she seemed to go through life spending herself willingly either for her own pleasure or in the service of others.

She never appeared to think for an instant what would benefit herself or be best for herself; she would sacrifice herself entirely for her friend as unhesitatingly as at another time she would indulge herself in any deleterious pleasure.

Since the incident in the poplar walk there had been no change between us, no increase of restraint in public or private. The mutual affection deepened and strengthened inwardly, that was all. And so we arrived within one week of the exam., and in that last week, on the Saturday evening, I had my usual Indian letter. I received it after dinner, and broke it open. I read the first few lines

with anger and surprise, and then thrust it into my pocket until I should be alone. As soon as I could, I hurried to my place and turned the key ; I wanted to be alone. Then I read :—

“ MY DEAR FRANCIS,

“ I have heard from sources that need not be mentioned here of your extraordinary friendship with an Indian woman at the college. I heard of this matter once before, but then I did not know that the person in question was a certain Mrs Chandmad. From my point of view any Oriental is an unfit companion for any Englishman, but in this case there are circumstances which make your friendship particularly undesirable.

“ Mrs Chandmad comes of an inferior race, and nothing can alter that fact by one iota. But, putting that aside, she is a married woman, a deserter of her husband, a renegade to her own people, and a morally worthless character.

“ She is at the present moment defying her family, who naturally wish her to return, but I can assure you she is in no position to continue doing so. She is a subject of the Parogwar Government, not the British, and her people, if they choose, can at any moment send over agents to arrest her and actually force her back to India, and if you should in any way encourage her rebellion or aid or assist her to stay in defiance, you may

find yourself in very serious trouble, and that for a person who in plain English would be called a . . . . . Pray break off all connection with her as soon as may be.

"I have written plainly, as I hear with disgust your infatuation for this person is the common talk of the college. Please let me understand you have put an end to it.

"It is only a day or two to your exam. when you receive this. I hope we shall have no breakdown nor failure nor anything of that sort.

Your affectionate father,

FREDERICK HEATH."

I stood transfixed with the letter in my hand, staring at the open leaf in a perfect fury.

Is there anything like the abuse of one we love to make us love more?

In that minute Naranyah was infinitely dear to me. .

One sentence in the letter cut through distinctly to my brain in the first wrath and surprise—"She is a married woman." Naranyah! and then . . . . . why not have told me?

Beside myself with rage, not against her, but against Fate, I walked up and down the room. There was the stamp of truth

on my father's letter; besides, in an overwhelming flood of conviction, Naranyah's own words, hints and manner came back to me. Fool! why had I not interpreted them rightly?

"Married," tied, bound, as she had said, a wreck so far as her free, unhampered life was concerned.

And that other sentence. "She is a Parogwar subject, not a British one. She could be arrested and forced back to India any moment." God! how she had lied to me when she had said that no one had a claim upon her!—No one had a right to interfere with her!

No right, perhaps, but what sophistry if they had the power!

Besides, she had distinctly said there was no one on her side who could separate us. How she had lied and deceived me! I was bitterly hurt.

Of course, I would not feel\* certain of anything until I heard what she had to say, but I felt afraid that the letter was correct.

"A deserter of her husband, a renegade to her own people, a morally worthless character," that was beside the point for me. The only thing that cut home in the matter was the apparently accurate statement of how inextricably tied and bound Naranyah was to

her own life—married, and the subject of a despotic government !

Up and down, up and down I walked, trying to see some hope in vain, and then waves of resentment would come over me as I thought how I had been deceived.

Then, when I became a little calmer, I began to see that the fault lay not so much with her.

Had she not kept the knowledge of all this from me for my sake ? Perhaps. But it would have been better, surely it would have been better, not to have carried the deception so far and so long.

Yet, as my thoughts wandered round the image of Naranyah in the light of the abusive letter in my hand, I only felt I loved her, clung to her the more.

Still, there was the vexation, the sore feeling there that she had deceived *me*. Had it been anyone else . . . ! And the crushing relentlessness of the facts.

I still walked on, restlessly thinking ; who could have told my father at all about the friendship ?

Had those cursed dogs who passed us in the poplar walk dared to interfere with my affairs ?

What was it to ~~them~~ whom I made my friend ?

Suddenly I heard Naranyah's footstep in the passage, and I walked to the door and opened it. She was outside, and looked at me with a smile that instantly died away in a look of horror as she caught my expression.

"What has occurred?" she exclaimed, glancing into the room as if for an explanation. There was nothing there.

"Come in," I said.

She crossed the threshold, and I shut the door after her, locking it, and put the key in my pocket.

Naranyah looked at me with increasing surprise.

"What is the meaning of this, Francis?" she asked.

"Only that I don't want you to go away until I have said all that I wish to you," I answered.

Naranyah threw herself into a chair in silence. I did not seek to be near her, nor to put my arm round her as usual. I stood with my back to the corner of the mantelpiece, facing the light and facing her.

I should have handed the letter to Naranyah direct had it been differently worded, but as it was it would seem like an insult.

There were only two points in it that mattered, and I went at once to them.

"I had a letter from my father this evening," I said, "and he tells me you are married and have left your husband in India. Is it a fact? If so, why didn't you tell me?"

Naranyah's face paled a little, otherwise she did not seem surprised or moved.

"I told you there was a man," she said in a low tone.

"You said you were engaged."

"It is the same thing."

"It is not the same thing," I said, conquering my impatience. "Is he your husband?"

"Not in the eye of God nor man."

"The eye of God and man have nothing to do with it," I said quietly. "Are you legally married?"

"And what if I were?" said Naranyah, springing up. "What right have you to examine and cross-examine me like this?"

I had my answer. A nearer or more direct one I should not get. I must draw the conclusion—she was married.

"Is it true that you are a Parogwar subject?" I said, looking at her, and perhaps the extreme illness I was feeling showed in my face, for the anger died out of hers.

"Yes," she answered.

"Then it is true that any moment your

people can have you arrested and sent back to India?"

"They can, but they won't," she replied.

I passed over the last statement. I had all the knowledge I had sought now.

"Very well," I said, "I have no right, as you say, to ask about your affairs nor to reproach you if you conceal them from me. All I want to say is that you must not stay here for me and involve yourself in any difficulty on my account. Now that I know the circumstances, I ask you to disregard all that I said in the laboratory; I would far rather you return as you intended than stay here for me. I should have acted differently if you had told me the case at the first."

"What first?" said Naranyah passionately, stung out of her evasiveness. "Was I bound when I came here as a stranger to nurse you to wear an inscription round my forehead—'I am married, I am bound hand and foot to my prince and my government?'"

"Afterwards, I admit, I did deceive you, but for your own sake. My idea was to keep everything distressing out of your thoughts. When you spoke to me in the laboratory, you were ill, unnaturally excited, unnaturally worked. I wanted to spare you any extra annoyance.

"I left you quite free. I told you you had no responsibility; I tried to shield from you all that was pressing upon me. I concealed these troubles from you at the time, I considered you had enough to meet. I would have told you later. Your father has seen good to reveal it all now, and what is the result?"

Naranyah's voice suddenly quivered, and a flood of sympathetic pity came over the expressive face as she looked at me.

"You are excited and worried and rendered ten times more unfit for your work on Monday, and what's the use? I have told you the truth, no one has any claim on me, that I admit; there are the people selfish and self-seeking always, a husband that they forced upon me when I was a child, and that I don't recognise, there are the ties and the bonds, but I will sever them all—for you."

This is what in European eyes would constitute her moral worthlessness!

On a sudden impulse I would have drawn her to me, protesting that my decision was already made, that I cared for nothing, that we would defy everything and everybody together. But she resisted me, and for the first time I saw that exquisite head turn from me in aversion.

"Don't, Francis," she said, "leave me alone; say nothing now. You may wish it unsaid when you have passed. Make no promises, I don't want them. I only want you to be happy in your own way."

I felt I was somehow in the wrong, as I always did when we came to these understandings; I felt, as I have done always, she was my superior.

"Be calm," said Naranyah, simply and soothingly, "and don't worry. What are all these stupid people worth that you should excite and make yourself ill like this? Nobody can drag me back to India unless I choose, be quite satisfied about that."

"You are quite in the right and I am quite in the wrong," I said, drawing the key of the door from my pocket and giving it to her. "Go if you like."

But she did not go, nor did she leave me all through the night. I had no sleep, and I did not even feel the want of it. The mind I controlled into a certain calmness, but a physical fever from overwork and overstrain kept my eyes staring open all night.

Then towards the morning a racking, splitting headache came on that rendered me blind and almost unconscious. All through

that Sunday preceding the exam. I lay on my back in a darkened room in a stupor of physical pain, knowing and caring and heeding nothing. And all that day the Indian sat beside me, wringing out handkerchiefs in hot water and putting them on my forehead.

She gave me two Phenacetin powders, but they produced no effect. The pain went raging and tearing on as if the whole brain was being torn with red-hot pincers.

No food and no drink passed my lips the whole day. I remember Naranyah brought me some, but I could not take it, and I scarcely opened them to speak. Once or twice I raised my lids as the long hours went by and I saw her always beside me. The night came on without any alleviation, and still by the dim light of the night-light I saw her watchful figure sitting there.

Then about three the pain suddenly lessened and mercifully I fell asleep.

The following Monday morning brought its results; two books filled in the exam. room and a completely answered paper. I had worked at my best and on my darling subject, Latin; the writing was nearly illegible here and there from the excessive trembling of my fingers, otherwise I think the work was faultless.

I hurried from the room among the last candidates, and almost struck Naranyah, who was standing in the crowd at the doors of the examination room.

She looked pale and worried, with the bloom of her face spoiled and pinched by anxiety and cold.

"Grand paper," I said to her. "Come along, you look wretched; let's get some luncheon. What have you been doing all the time I have been in there?"

"Walking about, enjoying the fog," answered Naranyah. "I have felt very anxious about you."

It was raw, chilly, and a slight drizzle falling, and the fog as black as ever when we turned out, and so it continued the whole fortnight more or less, all our work being done by gas-light, though it was June.

And I was ill more or less the whole time. I had a headache one day and neuralgia another, and each morning on waking felt almost *in extremis*; but I did my work as I meant that I should.

There was the brain and the will, and they managed it between them somehow.

The last afternoon came; and as Naranyah and I got into our cab I felt satisfied. The

day had cleared ; a little weak sun broke out as we drove way.

"Victory, I think, Naranyah," I said, as we looked at each other. "I believe I am first."

"Then now you will be content, Francis, for a short time," answered Naranyah, smiling. "I must go away this next Monday ; I ought really to have gone before, but I have waited to be with you until you were through this. I must positively go now."

"Where to ?" I said.

"Down to Ventnor."

"Won't you tell me what you are going to do, and how long you will be ?"

"Oh, I shan't be long ; three weeks or so, perhaps. In that time you will hear whether you have passed or not, and how high in the list. In that time, Francis," said Naranyah in a lower tone, "you must make your decision as to what you want me to do." •

I flushed and was silent. In the pride and elation of the moment, I felt as if I could command the world—at least, my appointment !

Then, as I glanced at her beside me, I felt how dear she was.

Between the two great passions of ambition

and affection I wanted to grasp the object of both.

We never can in this world; we are always called upon in some way or at some time to choose.

"What are you going to do?" I repeated.

"I am going on a visit to some relations who have come over from Katiewar," she answered rather reluctantly. "They are great friends of my uncle."

"May I not come down there too?" I said.

"Most certainly not," said Naranyah. "I don't wish you even to write to me. Try and put me out of your thoughts altogether for these few weeks. See how you get on without me," she added half chaffingly, looking up into my gloomily disappointed face. "As soon as you know it, write or telegraph the result of your exam., and whether you mean eventually to accept your appointment, to the King's Hotel, Ventnor—that's where we shall be"

"I shall come down there as soon as I know the result," I said, "if you don't object."

"No," answered Naranyah slowly, "I don't mind then; but don't come before, nor write. Promise me."

"Certainly," I said, and I knew Naranyah trusted me, though I could never feel to implicitly trust her.

Two days later Naranyah left our square. She took all her luggage and moved out of her rooms. I went down to see her off from Waterloo.

I was vexed and disgusted and annoyed that she was going, and I told her so.

"Just when I had no work and we could do anything we liked," I said discontentedly, after she had taken her ticket and got her luggage, and we were standing side by side on the platform.

"And just when you must be considering your success and your plans and your future, not thinking about me," returned Naranyah, smiling.

"My dearest one," I answered, "I shall think of you just the same whether you are here or not."

Naranyah only laughed, and the train came up.

The porter left us, and I sprang into the carriage after her.

There were no other passengers, and nobody just there upon the platform.

We were both reluctant to leave each other, if only for three weeks, both sorry.

On the impulse of that sorrow, I put my arm round her and looked into her face. I would not for worlds have forced a caress upon her, but I saw that I was permitted, and I clasped and kissed her.

She put both arms round my neck, and pressed my lips with hers in a passion of affection.

"Good-bye, Francis," she murmured. "Take care of your health while I am away from you."

We could not have been more than a second or two, but the train moved on a little without our noticing it. I jumped from Naranyah's carriage while it was in motion, and turned off the platform as the train steamed on its way.

I walked out of the station and caught an omnibus and came up home on it revolving many things.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CONQUEST.

THE college now that Naranyah was gone was intolerable. I had done my work, why should I stay on there, even if the term were not ended?

Most of the fellows when they had finished their exams. went away to their people or to stay with friends, but I did not know of any who would care to see me at that precise moment. My only very near relations were my father and a married sister, also in India.

So for the short period that still remained of uncertainty I arranged through the wife of a French tutor there, Madame Hellier, to board with a family that she knew received young men in their vacations sometimes.

"Oh, such a charming family, Mr Heath," she said to me, "and they will make you so comfortable."

It really did not much matter to me where I was as long as I was out of that beastly old college where I had been absolutely immured so long. So the matter was settled, and I moved my traps from my rooms and entered the "charming family" for a month.

I don't know what all the other students thought when I left immediately after Naranyah, and I certainly did not care; they were all very civil outwardly to me the few days I stayed on there and when I left.

The family, as I understood, consisted of a Mrs Webbs and her two sons; not a word had been said about a daughter, so that I was rather surprised, the first morning I breakfasted with them, to find myself seated directly opposite some sort of a vision in white.

Mrs Webbs from the head of the table, noticed my glance of surprise, and said sweetly :—

"I don't know whether 'you knew my daughter Mabel was at home just now. Mabel dear, this is Mr Francis Heath, who is so very clever."

Of course I bowed and she bowed and smiled, and I did not think much about it.

It was nothing to me whether Mrs Webbs had no daughters or fifty. I looked at her

several times, because when a person is just in face of you, with only the toast-rack and tea-cake between you, you can't help it, and I addressed a few remarks to her of the ordinary kind.

Later I learned that I had been specially introduced into the circle as an eligible person for Mabel to fix her affections upon, and that they had had the cheek to enquire whether I was pre-engaged! But of course then I had no idea of it.

Pre-engaged! I should think I was! If they could only have known where my thoughts were as I sat with them at the table, where they had been the previous night, when I walked up and down my room in the dark, because I had burnt my candle out trying to decide the problem of the future!

If they had known that I had never taken off my clothes until the morning, when I had washed and dressed, and shaved in order to come down looking clean and well dressed! Pre-engaged! If they could have known how every outer sense was dulled and blunted, how every inner thought was absorbed and occupied by my one great passion, and that a mental one, which could know no reaction nor satiety! Known how,

even as I sat and looked across the table, a brilliant, smiling face swam before me, how that last kiss still burned upon my lips!

Of all men in the world I was the most impervious to outer influences, wrapt round and round in the one invulnerable armour, a suppressed and inner passion.

They might well be pardoned for their error. Judging as outsiders, the girl opposite me was certainly, in her own way, lovely.

I saw it all mechanically as she sat smiling in front of me. A pyramid of the palest, brightest brown hair drawn off a neck and skin of cream, eyes of the loveliest, clearest azure and sparkling like sunshine, and a mouth so soft and delicate that it seemed as if a kiss must sear it. And the face was nothing beside the figure, even that much that I could see above the table; a throat half-screened, half-revealed through a ruffle of lace, shoulders of an Artémis, supporting the full, low, curved breast of a Venus, and the sloping, yielding waist clasped by an open-work silver zone. And her beauty absolutely failed to stir me at all. Once the mind has been opened to another, and a mental and an unselfish passion, once it has entertained the love of another human being

for *its own sake*, once it has felt the adoration of mind for mind, it will turn voluntarily from all lower, baser passions, ones in which the animal feelings are predominant.

At any rate, I can speak for myself. I turned from the thought of this woman then, not only with indifference, but with disgust.

Not that there was much in this girl to appeal to the coarser impulses, nor much to suggest the realities of life; she was graceful enough for any poet's conception, and appeared the very realisation of youth and purity, but there was the mental inanity in her, the entire absence of the higher human intellect, no stimulus in her presence, none of the divine afflatus on her lips.

What could a passion for her be but one of the pleased senses? And then it must fall in the rank of the lower ones, soon to be gratified, soon to react, soon to be appeased. How different from a feeling like my love for Naranyah, which had shot its burning, stinging roots into the innermost fibres of my mental organisation.

After a day or two I noticed that the girl, without being exactly obtrusive, seemed to take more interest in me than in her two brothers or her mother, or her piano, or her

songs, and my attention was drawn to her with the resolve to be still more formal and distant in my manner.

And as the days passed on and she forced herself more upon my notice, my indifference grew into contempt.

How differently she acted, and with what a different effect, from Naranyah in our first days together!

I think she liked me in her way, but what was her way? She would have liked me to like her.

She was self-centred, thinking only of herself with reference to me; she would have liked to see me at her feet, liked me to have admired her, to have pleased her vanity, gratified her. She thought only of attracting attention to herself; that I should admire her, desire her, devote myself to pleasing her; this was what she would have understood by love. Phaugh! How her conceited, self-conscious, simpering ostentatious way of leaving or entering a room, getting up or sitting down, or pouring out her claret at luncheon, repelled me! All to attract, to attract notice to herself; how it contrasted with the careless indifference to self, the complete unconsciousness of Naranyah's manner!

She, with all her talents, all her beauty,

had never sought the slightest attention for herself; she had always been too occupied with the idea of how she could best aid or soothe or help another, and would have recklessly, prodigally sacrificed herself on a generous impulse; and this girl, one felt, with all her soft, engaging looks and sighs would not have drawn a pin across her delicate cheek to save one from hanging.

And to me there was no comparison between even the two types of beauty. It struck me every night as she came in or out of the drawing-room, and threw herself about on the couches before me.

That form, contracted and released alternately by art, could not quicken my pulse nor excite the worship of the eye as the free, natural, undisguised lines of the waist and slender hips, the straight limbs and thrown-back shoulders of the other.

Her eyes were lovely as the *lapis lazuli*, but where was the light of the emancipated divinity of human intellect that lit up the soft, dark eyeballs of the Indian? And in the pink lips there was not a tenth of the seductive beauty that lay in the crimson curve, shaded with purple and black, of Naranyah's mouth.

As days passed and I took no heed of

her, she exerted herself more. It was—  
“Oh, Mr Heath, will you button this glove for me?” “Oh, Mr Heath, will you turn over the leaves of this song while I just try it?” “Will you bring my cup of tea over here?” and so on.

I liked young Webbs, the elder one, very much; but his sister bored me, and after the first week I used not to go into the drawing-room to see her attitudinise.

Webbs and I would go out for the evening together, and then, whether we went to a theatre, or merely took a walk, or looked in at some of his friends, I went straight to my own room after.

Of course I suppose the rest noted my indifference to her in the same way as others had noted the reverse with Naranyah, and one night when Webbs and I were walking up from the Strand home, he suddenly broke into my thoughts, which were away, as usual, in the Isle of Wight, by saying:—

“Heath, you know Mabel admires you very much. She was saying to me the other day she had never seen a face so handsome, and that struck her so much, as yours.”

“She’s very kind, I am sure,” I murmured,

and without taking my pipe out of my mouth.

"But you don't affect her much, I think, old chap, do you?" continued Webbs.

I should, I think, have made some sarcastic remark a year ago, but intercourse with the Indian had taught me more sympathy with the feelings of others, and more pity for their weaknesses.

Webbs was perhaps his sister's emissary, and all I said would probably go back to her; if she had inordinate vanity I did not grudge satisfying it within bounds.

"Your sister is a very lovely girl," I said, "I can quite see that, as everybody must, but personally, as regards myself, well, the fact is, I am pre-engaged."

"Pre-engaged!" echoed Webbs, so startled that he betrayed himself, "why we asked particularly, and they told us . . . ."

and there he stopped. I was looking at him in undisguised surprise and wonder, and my look recalled him. He flushed violently, stammered, and desperately tried to cover what he had said, but the thing was done.

His confusion was so painful that I dropped my eyes to the pavement, and said gravely, as I went on smoking, ignoring his unlucky blunder :—

"And that, you see, renders more than ordinary admiration out of the question."

"Of course, of course," said Webbs laughing nervously, and we neither of us said any more.

He was genuinely aghast, I think, to have let out his mother's and sister's secret to me, and I was sorry for him, and we both got away from the subject.

After that there was a certain coldness in the family circle towards me, Mabel looked pale and injured and ceased to pose so much for me, and I was no longer kept out of the drawing-room.

I and her two brothers used to smoke outside on the balcony, instead of down in the dining-room, on the hot evenings. We used to talk on and off, but if they dropped the conversation I did not keep it up, and they often left me there alone; and it was only a few days after Webbs' revelation that, as I came in and crossed the room, where the gas was already turned down, on my way upstairs; I heard my own name, and then Mrs Webbs' voice continue, I suppose to some confidante:—

"*So* tall, and *so* good looking, and *so* gentlemanly, they would have made such a *lovely* pair; and she is *devoted* to him."

They were in the back drawing-room, but the doors stood partially open.

I laughed contemptuously to myself as I left the room and went upstairs. Devotion, forsooth!

What would Mrs Webbs have thought of the gentlemanly person she desired for her daughter's husband if she could have seen him after he had entered his room and locked it for the night?

If she had seen me throw myself face downwards on the bed, twisting my hands together in the pillow in an agony of longing for the absent one.

The word "devoted" had brought that other scene so vividly before me, the words, "Francis, you must know I am devoted to you," seemed in my ears, and the wave of tremendous passion came over me again as it had done then.

"Devoted to me." Yes, *she* had been.

When I compared this other sordid desire of the girl—unworthy the name of a passion—for me, because I could satisfy her vanity and her wordly ambition—when I compared this desire with the giving all, asking nothing, affection of the other, every vein seemed to swell and swim with the longing for her, and not only with the longing for her, but with the craving to repay her, to give her everything, who wanted nothing;

because she had no vanity, to flatter her to the utmost ; because she had no wish to subjugate nor to humiliate, to let her know I was her eager, willing slave.

Blind and deaf, with every sense turned inwards, I lay in the darkness, thinking.

Surely this love, born of intense admiration for the mind and soul of another, is the highest form. It is the divine conception of Plato, neglected by the moderns, but Naranyah and I could realise it together.

I got up after a time and amused myself with writing a long letter to Naranyah, that I knew I could not send, and then tearing it to shreds and burning them one by one in my candlestick ; then I dragged my book box from under the bed, and went to the bottom of it and unearthed the Dialogues. After Naranyah they were the best companions, and I sat reading till daybreak.

I had laid in a good supply of candles of my own now. .

Then excited and stimulated, almost beyond bounds, as I had sometimes been at the college, I got up and walked backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, over the heads of the sleeping occupants in the room beneath.

The next morning everyone said I looked

ill. I affected surprise and remarked I had had a good night. So I had, in a way.

My friendship with Webbs continued, and we went about a good deal together. The weather was inviting, and we had neither of us anything to do. We made the round of the music-halls, and saw anything noticeable in the theatres, but it was all tedious to me. Webbs was no good as a companion for me.

It is such a nuisance to be stared at, as if you were a maniac, when you express a passing thought or chance opinion, or be answered with a blank, "Ah, I suppose so," or "Oh? Really!"

Such a bore to be called upon to translate every quotation, to explain every allusion you chance to make; it spoils all ready communication of thought.

One of the old arguments concerning friendship begins "*Virtus, inquam, virtus*" is the basis of it, but afterwards it drops to a "similarity of tastes." The latter is more true, a similarity of tastes and an identity of knowledge. With Naranyah, a broken sentence, half a word, a raising of the eyebrows, a glance between us, or a quarter of a smile was all that was needed from one to the other and the idea of the moment

was caught, realised and understood by both.

How I missed her! No matter whether I was in the theatre with Webbs and his friends, or alone in my room. Webbs tried to induce me once or twice to join him on other sort of expeditions, but I was too inflamed and possessed with different feelings to care for the seedy pleasures he offered me.

"You go if you like," I used to say to him, "I don't care about it." I have no doubt he thought me all sorts of things, but that did not matter.

And so the time slipped on in an outward quiet tedium, and then came the day. It began well.

On the breakfast table I found a letter from my sister, who had married in India a colonel in a Bengal regiment, Richard Welby. She wrote a chatting, friendly letter, and told me how her pet Richard had just been made Sir Richard Welby.

"And now, just think," she went on, "he is an A.D.C. to the King, and C.B. and V.C., all three. Isn't it nice? And when we were married he was only a miserable colonel. Now he gets such a screw from one thing and the other that we are awfully well off. And, Francis, I am so longing for you to come

out and distinguish yourself, as you can in this C.S. I am sure you have passed, and I imagine you here already."

I was pleased with the letter, and awfully glad of the news for her sake, and I glowed at the word "Distinguish." Yes, I was sure I could do it.

We lunched about one. Just before, Webbs suggested going out, but I thought not, and I went upstairs to get a book for half an hour's read.

While I had my head half in the book-box, a tap came at the partially open door, and the servant entered as I called out "Come in."

"Please, sir, this telegram has just come for you," she said.

I started to my feet. I guessed directly what it was. It was the telegram announcing the result of the exam. As so often happens, the thing that had been in my thoughts night and day—anticipated, expected, longed for—came now at a moment when I was thinking of it not at all.

I took it in silence, and the girl withdrew. I walked towards the hearth, breaking it open, and read:

"You have passed First. Heartiest congratulations.—R. G."

God! I was mad in that first second. Then

room and telegram sank into darkness, and I sank somewhere, too. I can't say, of course, a bit how long a time passed, but I came round and looked round shortly. I found myself lying on the floor, my head within half an inch of the pointed corner of the fender, and the border of the counterpane I had clutched at in falling, in my hand.

I scrambled up, feeling gasping, and my head swimming. A kingdom for some brandy ! But there was none within reach.

I got to the washing-stand, and poured out some water in the tooth-glass and drank it : it tasted of soap and tooth-brushes. No matter. Passed First ! I was free. I could go to Naranyah. I must go to her, tell her, now, at once.

I gathered up the telegram, and then tore out my Gladstone bag from its corner, turned everything in it out on to the floor, and then began to throw into it what I should want.

So I was First ; I had my reward ; I cared for nothing. One wish—to get to my darling at Ventnor and tell her.

I flung in the things anyhow ; the wet soap went in as it was, and a new lavender tie on the top of it. No matter. A couple of shirts, hair-brush, writing-paper and pens that I never was without, travelling inkstand, night-shirt,

razors, and one slipper—I couldn't see the other, and I couldn't stay to look.

I snapped the bag, and then turned out my pockets. Money one must always have.

Three sovereigns, besides silver and copper. That would do. Now for an A.B.C. to look up the trains.

I left all the things on the floor as they were, suits and shirts, and even a few books, which I had taken out of their box previously. No matter, nothing mattered. I caught up the bag, everything swimming before my eyes with excitement, and went downstairs.

They were all in the dining-room, waiting for luncheon; the cloth was already laid. They all looked up as I entered. I was quite calm outwardly, but I suppose I looked white or something, for they stared as if they had never seen me in their lives before.

"You've heard?" said Webbs, the most intelligent of the lot.

"Yes, I have passed First."

There was a moment's complete silence, and then somebody sighed. I turned to Mrs Webbs.

"I am going away for a few days, Mrs Webbs. You will see I have left all my things"—yes, by Jove, she would—"and then I shall come back to arrange for them.

I want to start as soon as I can. Can I see an A.B.C. or a Bradshaw?"

"Certainly," answered Mrs Webbs, rather vacantly. "Harry, dear, just give Mr Heath that A.B.C. It's on the side."

Webbs handed me the book, and I looked up Ventnor, and saw a train left Waterloo 2.25. "I could catch that," I said.

"But you will have some luncheon, surely," said Webbs. "You had nothing at breakfast."

"No, thanks; I shall have to hurry if I want that train, so I'll say good-bye, Mrs Webbs, for a few days."

"Shan't Jane get you a cab?" she suggested.

"It will be shorter, I think, if I take the first I see crawling, thanks. Good-bye."

The women seemed to shrink at the touch of my icy hand, and our fingers hardly met; the men grasped it warmly.

"Good-bye, Heath; I congratulate you awfully."

I smiled and thanked them and got away. I took my hat and stick from the hall and walked up the terrace like the wind.

Going to Naranyah with that telegram in my pocket, and the July sun over my head, I felt perfectly, gloriously happy.

What a day it was! Brilliantly bright: bright as my own feelings.

The train was on the point of starting when I reached the station, and I had no time for a peg, as I should have liked, for I wanted to send off a telegram to Naranyah saying I was coming, and that used up the only spare minutes. However, it did not matter. My bag was flung into one of the carriages, and I followed.

How the sun streamed down beside both windows as we started! "Passed First," everybody seemed to be saying as they looked at me.

I leant my head back on the cushion. Naranyah had said I must make my decision, but not now surely. Let me enjoy thankfully the first moments of success.

One's life is all spoiled by always having some confounded problem to decide.

I thought in a rosy dream of my landing in India, the pleasure of praise from everyone, of the freedom from all bother and anxiety in my secured appointment, and the future distinction, like my brother-in-law's; but through it all I clasped Naranyah still. Madness! It must be one or the other.

We were due at Ventnor at 6-6 p.m., but

it was somewhat later when the train slid into the station.

As we came up, I caught sight of Naranyah on the platform. I kicked the door open and sprang out; another second and I had clasped both her hands. She looked into my face.

"First?" she said.

I nodded, speechless with delight and excitement, my eyes devouring her face, and a warm current seeming to run through our joined hands; words were hardly needed between us.

"I am so glad, Francis; I knew you would do it," she said, her face brimming over with pleasure. "Is that your bag they are flinging out? Will you like to send it on by the hotel omnibus, and we can walk down?"

"Oh, yes, that will do very well; anything," I answered; and after arranging that, we walked out of the station together.

The lovely afternoon was just verging into a still more lovely evening. Beneath us lay the transparent sea; the air after London seemed thin and rarified; all was peaceful stillness round us. Naranyah's arm lay through mine; surely I had stepped into another world!

"I have missed you beyond all telling,

Naranyah," I said, as we descended the hill. "I could hardly keep away from you so long. What have you been doing all this time?"

"When did you hear?" she asked.

"One o'clock this afternoon," I answered, "and I came down immediately, just as I was; nothing on earth could have kept me away from you another minute. You are pleased to see me, aren't you?" I said, laughing, and pressing her arm.

"Pleased, Francis! I thought I should have put an end to my life down here. I have been so dull without you. The fact is, everything is dull now, after being with you who—well . . ."

She left the sentence unfinished; her eyes and an arch look said the rest. And with my eyes only I answered her.

When we reached the foot of the hill, Naranyah said, as we turned along the parade to the hôtel: .

"Mr Geizai, my uncle's friend, has gone up to London for a week, and will not be back for another two days, so that I am alone now. When I had your telegram, I engaged a room for you. You will stay these two days, won't you? And we must settle something in them. You have no idea

how difficult it has been for me to keep things straight so long. Mr Geizai wants me to go back with him to India on the 27th of next month."

I tightened my hold on Naranyah's arm, and said nothing.

"Don't you want something to eat or drink?" she said, as we neared the King's Hotel. "We can have dinner now, if you like."

"No, not for me, Naranyah," I said. I knew she never ate much after the middle of the day. "I should like some coffee and brandy, that's all."

Naranyah ordered it to be brought out to a table on the balcony, which ran all along the front of the coffee-room on the first floor, and we went out and took chairs in the warm, still air. The balcony overlooked the parade and sea—the small, quiet crescent of parade and the clear, calm, slightly swaying sea. Naranyah sat opposite me, where all the light fell upon her. Looking at her, and with the "Passed First" in my pocket, I felt that life was a happy thing.

The waiter brought out coffee and brandy and cigars on a tray. Naranyah ordered cream; that also was brought, and we in-

dolently made our coffee to our taste between laughter and mutual assistance.

Enjoying there, as we were, the easy comfort money brings, I balanced my spoon on the edge of the cup, and thought :

"How much does she care for these things? And what have I to offer in exchange?"

"Are you weighing me in the bowl of that spoon?" she asked jokingly, looking across the little round table.

"No," I answered solemnly, "I am weighing myself."

Naranyah stretched her arm across and clasped her hand over mine, pressing the bowl of the spoon to the bottom of the cup and nearly overturning the whole thing.

"Then that is the right position," she said laughing, but with meaning. "With me, Francis, you outweigh everything."

From the room behind us three men stepped out on to the balcony. They stared at us, attracted by the laughter and clatter of china, but they would not hear the words, and they could only see two people fooling over a teacup. How startled they would have been could they have seen the suppressed fury of smouldering passions my laughter covered, and known that the decision for two lives hung on the coming night.

Naranyah leant back, with a brilliant smile on her lips, balancing her chair, and hanging one hand over the rail of the balcony, full of easy carelessness. She was a married woman—I could hardly believe it.

I drank up the coffee, black and unmixed, except with the brandy, and then turned from the table and drew my chair close up to the rail and beside Naranyah's, and lighted up a cigar in silence.

She looked away from me thoughtfully towards the horizon, and I watched her. It is always a ticklish thing to watch beauty closely, and never to be recommended to those who value their peace of mind. And she was beautiful certainly, singularly handsome in form and feature, with a very youthful, but just now fresh-unfolded, beauty, and she never seemed to know it in the least. And there was something more here than mere beauty, which stirs but cannot keep enthusiasm. A tranquil calm, a sense of something unapproachable, an influence which, while it seduced and fascinated, kept the mind back in an awed check.

As I looked, my personal feeling of admiration sank slowly, and became submerged in an overwhelming desire to serve, to be of some use, some benefit to her; that

peculiar craving to devote and sacrifice oneself is as innate in the human being as hunger; it moves the savage, gashing himself before his idol, and the martyr in the flames. She stirred and roused this emotion in my cold, egotistical nature, and my whole soul rushed towards her, where it had found light.

If for her benefit, I must give her up; no matter what my wishes were. This was my first definite thought born of those vague sensations.

I must in some way wrest her secrets from her, and know what she desired. But how? I knew a direct interrogation, which answers with the English mind, would be the directest way of closing hers to me.

"Supposing I have come down here to finally say good-bye to you, Naranyah?"

She turned quickly, and I had my answer. There seemed a blast of chilled pain upon her face, and I could not help a feeling of triumphant delight.

"I should be glad," she said after a minute, "I think, for our friendship to be broken off would be advantageous for you. It will be best for you to go out to India, by and by."

"Oh! well, I don't think I am going then," I answered cynically, knocking off the ash

of the cigar against the rail and watching her closely under downcast lids. "You see, I haven't a charming wife awaiting me there as you have a husband. Perhaps you have a son also?"

"I have no son," replied Naranyah quietly, and in a very low tone, "nor have we ever consummated the marriage."

I had guessed as much.

"And if you don't return, what will become of him?"

"He has already another wife. Ours was a child marriage; only a form."

"But at one time you wanted to return, you told me," I said.

"Yes, I did, because any love is preferable to none. The selfish love of parents, the animal love of a husband, even these seem inviting when one has led for some time the lonely, uncared for existence of a foreigner and stranger in London. But that was before . . ." and there she stopped suddenly.

"Before what?" I asked.

Naranyah was silent.

"Before what?" I repeated.

Naranyah sprang up.

"I won't be questioned like this!" she said with a flash in her eyes. And she turned and leant over the rail towards the sea.

I believed I knew what she meant, before she had known that I loved her. She would not say it, either from personal pride or from unwillingness to give a bias to my unformed decision. I got up, too, and leant beside her.

"And now you have no desire to return?"

"None. There is everything there that the body of man can desire; nothing that the mind or heart. The animal desires are not everything—of course a man must eat and drink, and so on; but after all he has in him still the divine nature of Brahm, and it is this that craves and longs and burns and desires after a comrade, and for love to live upon, and to support it, the same as the whole great spirit of Brahma lives on and in the love of his worshippers.

"As a child, I used to hope and fancy that the man destined for me would come with the same flame in his breast as I had, and then, at the urging of the inner spirit, a demonstration through the body and a perfect union is well; but when the time came they brought me an animal, and I knew it, and I would not descend and mix with him, any more than I would go into a field and choose a brute; I who, from a

child, had learnt the credo of the Hindus :—  
Aham Brahm<sup>1</sup>."

There was a second's pause, and then she added :—

"The love of the soul, the light of the mind that plays through the worship of the senses, that breaks and bends and subdues, and uses the body as its instrument and exponent, as the brain uses the voice—that is what fills and fires one's life and one's being."

She looked away from me, still towards the vague horizon, and leant hard upon the rail as if to extinguish and still the burning flame she had said was in her breast.

I put my arm round her and pressed her shoulder, the further one from me, so that it forced her to turn a little, and I looked into her face. I knew she would see my eyes blazing with adulation ; I knew there was love and worship in every line of my face ; I knew she would feel my breast heave as I looked into her eyes ; I knew there was a flattering homage in every tone, as I said :—

"And supposing appointments and positions were given up, and we shared each other's lives — became all in all to each other, Naranyah—what then ? "

<sup>1</sup> "I am God,"

I had my reply before she spoke.

A fluttering, uncertain, hesitating smile leapt over her face ; a light and glory above this world looked out of her eyes. She searched my face with a yearning, longing look, opened her lips impulsively to speak, closed them again, and with a quick movement shook herself free from me.

"Impossible, Francis ; you would be wasted. You would be throwing yourself away. Give up the idea. I thought you would have given it up, that's why I gave you all this time to forget me in."

"And you see I have not forgotten," I said quietly ; and there was a long silence. I had my information : she was more than willing.

Other people came out on the balcony. We both sat thinking. Before eleven they turned out the lights in the coffee-room, and there was a general move from the balcony. Naranyah got up.

"I think I shall go in ; it's close to eleven, and I am tired," she said, leaning on the chair back.

I knew her habit of being up about five every morning, so doubtless she was.

"Do," I said. "I will stay here for the present. You can leave the window," I said to the servant, "I'll shut it all up."

Naranyah passed through the glass doors. A few seconds more and I was alone in the quiet night.

I sat and thought; on me devolved the decision for two lives. Staring at the ground, I sat motionless. Eleven struck and then twelve, and then one, just as they used to strike when I was sitting before my mathematical problems in the college.

At one I went in, crossed the dark room and passed into the dark corridor.

All was black and silent. I turned down the passage to the left; it led to Naranyah's room. At that hour she would not be up I knew, and had it been the case of an ordinary woman, of course I could not have sought her. But between Naranyah and me there was perfect liberty, as there was perfect innocence, and she would not resent my presence, I knew, at any time.

Perhaps from her I might gain an inspiration; by myself I was evidently hopeless.

When I stopped before her door, I saw it was already open about a foot. How like her, I thought; and I gently pushed it open and went in.

It was a large room; the window was open, too, wide up to its fullest extent, and

in it stood a table and a chair pushed back, evidently where she had been sitting.

A heavy, wide bed stood between window and door, far removed from both, and by it another console table with a weighty reading-lamp upon it.

The wick was turned down, and there was a thick lamp-shade over it, but the steadily burning flame from underneath sent a flood of yellow light over the bed, leaving the ceiling and rest of the room in shadow.

And she was lying there asleep between open window and door ; her rings and watch, and some gold, lying in a heap by the lamp ; careless, thoughtless, heedless as usual of all that appertained to self.

She was lying on her back, the inimitable grace of her figure, clearly outlined under the thin covering, fully revealed. Both arms were loosely clasped above her head ; the linen in the hot night lay open from her chest and throat, showing its rounded softness and the warm, transparent skin, pulsating gently with her even breath.

The face was upturned and sideways, so that the light fell fully on the enchanting curve of the head, in its deep blackness, resting on the pillow.

Oh for a pen which should immortalise

the divinity, the dignity, the quiet of that perfect face! The arch of the eyebrow, the curve of the nostril, the form of the mouth! I approached and stood at the foot-rail of the bed, as a devotee stands at the rail of a shrine.

There lay all that to me was highest and sweetest in human nature, all that I really prized on earth.

Was I to voluntarily renounce it? And for what?

The two sides of the future rose before me as in a vision. On the one side lay a few more months of study, and then the going out to India, the pleasure and the congratulations of relatives, monetary ease, and the prospect of brilliance and the distinction I had always thirsted for and craved.

On the other, a life of absolute obscurity and poverty and struggle. My father's disappointment and anger, 'my own years of wasted labour would be upon my head, coupled with the shame, perhaps, of a fugitive.

Certain honour, commendation, distinction, money and ease without her.

Possible ignominy, reproach, flight, calumny, poverty and suffering with her. Which?

Could the loved presence of this other mind console for all? I thought so.

For myself surely I had already decided; I would embrace every danger, run every risk to keep her.

Everything would be empty without her for me—had I not seen it?

What had life in the college been? A hell.

Life in the vacations? A miserable tedium.

I had the first place in the list, but it seemed nothing now. The physical attraction of another woman had been offered me, but it only excited disgust.

Above all, my knowledge, the treasure I had thought without price, had it contented me? Bitterly I thought of my learning and wasted labour and talents and accumulated knowledge; the brilliant gifts I had inherited from both parents and added to by culture, and what joy from them?

But now here I felt with that head upon my breast I could defy the happiness and wealth of kings. And yet it must be flight and secrecy from her people, who would probably pursue her, and then at the end I might have her torn from me by the arm of her law and her government, and I should

have the unutterable horror of never knowing what had become of her.

Dragged from me into impenetrable, outer darkness, to be punished in God knows what horrible way for her contumacy and rebellion.

An independent, despotic, Indian government could not touch me, but could wreak in utter secrecy and security its fury upon its own subject.

How much better to let her go now! Openly and honourably in the sunlight of all men's approval, and at least safe and unharmed.

I stood at the bottom of the bed looking at her, and thought; with my arms folded on my breast where all was a hell of struggling agony; and she slept on in peaceful, unruffled calm, so lovely and so unconcerned, so untouched by sorrow or suffering at present.

Could I make her content? Or would she learn in time to hate me as much as she loved me now?

Oh for one glimpse into the future! But we have to make all our decisions blind.

My eye fell suddenly on the short pointed table knife that lay on Naranyah's table by a half-cut paper book.

A solution! How easy to seize it and

stab her in her soft breast, and then myself! To mingle our blood and catch each other's dying breath and expire in each other's arms! Why not? Whom the Gods love die young, and I had already felt the mockery of life.

I had seen success and tasted my triumph, and found it worthless.

As it had been, so it would be in the future. But here was possible, one moment of rapture and then an eternal sleep together, preferable to the vicissitudes and uncertainty of life.

I was more of a Pagan than a Christian, more of a Greek than a Briton, and I would have done it then at that moment when my brain was inflamed to madness, had I been sure she would consent; but I could not know that she would consent, rather I knew from her hopeful gaiety of nature that she would always choose to live.

I turned from the bed and threw myself from physical prostration on my knees by the window, and leant my arms on the sill. Beyond was the palpitating, lustrous sky, the moon hung low in it, giving but little light, and a great planet, the planet Venus, blazed in front of me.

"Oh, universal powers," I thought, looking

from the quiet, sinking moon to the restless light of the planet, "help me to decide."

Torn in that frightful indecision, weighing and balancing and calculating shades and degrees of suffering, amongst which I knew my own must be the maximum, I knelt with my arms hung over the sill in absolute despair.

Whatever sins or crimes I have committed in my life, I think they were all pre-punished in that night, in those awful moments when my whole inner existence seemed wrenched in two by the effort and the agony and the doubt. At last the strain broke. An exulting calm flowed in upon my heart. I had decided. Happiness such as is not often known by a man was offered here to me, and I hesitated. For what?

For an idea.

If, as we shook hands in a final farewell on the steamship's deck, there was black emptiness and darkness in our hearts, would it be compensated for by the knowledge that we were doing the ordinary thing, the orthodox thing, the safe thing? Fulfilling a fancied duty, sacrificing ourselves for people who in reality would do quite well without us?

My indecision was ingratitude. Take the

gifts the Gods provide. Dare for once to enjoy.

I rose, decided, proud, happy. All should go.

Everything flung in the balance against her could not equalise it.

Let the sin, suffering, and judgment be upon my head.

I glanced out. Diana had sunk, and Venus feverishly glittered and danced in the pale, luminous sky in the form of a dagger.

Quietly, and full now of a perfect calm, I took a scrap of paper from the table, and wrote upon it in Gujerati: "I have decided. We are united for Eternity, against all the world."

I slipped off a ring I wore—a diamond one—the only thing I possessed of any value, and put the paper through it, and laid it on the table. From hers I chose the plainest and least valuable, and put it on.

The night was almost gone.

With one more look to the bed to stamp that image for ever on my mind, I passed out of the room, never to regret, never to repent, in spite of all it brought, the decision made there. I have said it triumphantly through all, and I say it now.

The rest of the night I spent in writing

letters; one to my old tutor, thanking him for his telegram; one to my sister, begging her to soften my decision as much as possible to my father, and represent to him that it was quite possible to turn one's life to some account even out of India; one to a friend at Constantinople, who had obtained the Assistant Consulship there; and one to my father.

I wrote it quickly and decidedly, telling him how sorry I was to disappoint him by giving up the idea of entering the Service; but I did not write much, for I knew anything I said would be useless.

He would think me insane, simply, whatever I said. When I had written it, I sat looking absently through the flame of the candle. How strange it all seemed!

A short time back and this Indian Civil Service had seemed everything to me. I had thought it worth sacrificing my comfort, pleasure, health, almost my life and reason for; and now that I had most unequivocally succeeded, now that I stood in the first place, I was merely thinking how I could best avoid receiving the dearly bought honour.

Anyhow, I was keenly happy. Never had I concluded the last Iambic or shut up Mill with the same delight as I finished those letters and slipped them into their envelopes.

I left them all open, subject to Naranyah's approval.

The letter addressed to Turkey was to a man who had gone out there to take up his post as student interpreter some few years ago. We had corresponded at intervals since, and he had always promised me, half in jest at first, but lately more seriously, that if I failed for the I.C.S., he would get me some post out there.

I wrote to him now, allowing him to assume I had failed, and asking him if he could find anything for me to do. I put my whole heart into the letter, for I really wanted some certain means of subsistence for myself and Naranyah, and I knew there was no opening for a man with my training in England.

To my father I intended to telegraph the next morning the news of my success, that he might know that three weeks before he had the news of my refusal to present myself for appointment.

By the time I had finished it was close to eight. I re-dressed, and made myself respectable, and went downstairs.

As I descended, with what most men would consider the death-warrants of myself and my prospects in my hand, I felt supremely content for the first time in my life—in that moment

when I had renounced everything that represents the material benefits of this world.

With a quick and elated step I crossed the hall. No food and no sleep and prolonged excitement seemed to have lightened the body and freed the mind somewhat from its troublesome companion.

When I entered the coffee-room, there were a good many people in it. I saw Naranyah standing by a small table in the window, and I crossed to it.

We sat down in silence, facing each other. I saw my ring on her finger, and I thought she looked very pale and grave, as if she felt that a wider river than the Rubicon had been crossed last night.

"Are you sure you have decided well?" she said in a low tone, when we were seated.

"I only wonder how I could have hesitated so long," I answered simply, watching her, as she poured out and handed me my coffee with all the grace and dexterity of an Indian.

After breakfast we went out, and I gave Naranyah the letters to read one by one as we walked up the sunny little parade. She read them through and handed them back to me without suggestion or emendation.

"Can I ever compensate you?" she murmured over the one to my father, "for giving up all these things?"

"There is no question of compensation, Naranyah," I said, putting them back in their envelopes and looking down at her. "They have all become worthless to me now beside you."

I asked her about the appointment in Turkey—what she thought of it—and she agreed with me that Turkey might offer a chance for me that England could not.

"For myself," she added, "it does not matter. I can get a medical post of some sort anywhere. We must keep up the deception till Mr Geizai has gone back to India," she said slowly, with her arm in mine, and looking down on the pavement. "I can persuade him that I am going to stay here for another three months to get another diploma, and then when he is in India, we must get away somewhere, and I must let them know by degrees that I mean to practise medicine for myself, and not return to India. Go back to town now, before he comes back, and the day he leaves the dock I drive to your place."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NEW LIFE.

I WENT back that same afternoon, and because it was the least trouble, went back to the Webbs'.

I found a pile of letters already waiting for me from friends and acquaintances, full of congratulations on my success. Some from the fellows at the college let in an envious tone between the lines that amused me.

I broke them open one after the other as I sat alone in the dining-room, and read them with a contemptuous laugh. It seemed so funny.

Then, when all were finished, I leant back in the chair with the open papers on my knee, musing.

One of the letters was from the fellow whose problem I had worked out that night in the laboratory, when I first kissed

Naranyah, first caught a sight and a breath of the divine Spirit in a human frame.

He had not passed, and while he wrote kindly of my success, I felt he was fearfully disappointed about himself.

"What a pity I cannot give him my chances," I thought. "How aghast he will be when he knows I have thrown them all away!"

As I sat there, I saw a familiar head pass the window. It was one of the principals of the college, Dr Wray. He glanced in over the box of geraniums in the window, and I went to open the hall door for him.

The moment he saw me he grasped my hand.

"I congratulate you, my dear fellow, a thousand times," he said warmly. "I knew you'd do it—I said so. You are a credit to the college. I am proud of you, Heath. At the top of the list, and two thousand marks above the next candidate. Seen the list? I thought not. I brought it with me."

This was half delivered in the hall and half in the dining-room, where we sat down and he unfolded the list.

"There you are. 'F. Heath, 5,954. Wray's College.' My dear boy, I can't tell you how delighted I am."

I laughed and thanked him, and said I was very pleased to have done him credit.

"You are destined to be a great man, Heath, if you only do yourself justice; I've always said so," continued Wray, pushing back his chair and looking at me. "We shall all see you Viceroy of the Indian Empire one day, I bet. You have ambition, you have self-control, and you have brains. You can do anything. Great gifts, great talents, great personal advantages, great opportunities. You're a lucky fellow; take the advice of an old man and be thankful for all you've got."

"Yes," I said dreamily, balancing a paper knife between my fingers and looking through the window, seeming to see a vision of greatness vanishing slowly in the sunlight; but a warmer, more heavenly haze of sunlight filled my heart.

"That Greck paper," went on Wray, chuckling, "ploughed a lot of fellows I know. You must have read your Plato to some account."

I had indeed, but to what a different one from what he thought!

"Well now, here's my small donation to every fellow who distinguishes himself from our place," he continued, getting out his

pocket-book and laying a cheque for fifty pounds on the table beside my hand. "And I never had greater pleasure in giving it before, never," and he pressed my hand again warmly.

I knew it was his custom to give, and for the fellows to receive it, if they had done special credit to the college. I accepted it and thanked him for all his compliments, and accepted his invitation to dine with him and the other Head the following night. And then he went, and I walked back into the dining-room.

"I don't care, I don't care," I thought exultingly, "let it all go; the Vice-regency itself be damned if I have her. All the State dinners and the honours and the flatteries, and the celebrity and the society of all the big wigs of India would not be worth a two minutes' conversation with her."

I went to the dinner the next night and was as much petted and flattered and feasted as a Caliph of Bagdad. It was a very merry dinner, partly, perhaps, because I myself was in marvellous spirits and imparted the electricity of them. The others noticed it; they attributed my gaiety to a different cause from the true one, but that didn't matter.

"He is transfigured from the pale student whom I used to see come into the lecture-room, eh?" said Wray, patting me on the shoulder as I sat next him. "No wonder you are pleased, my boy, I should be proud of myself in your place."

The day after that my father telegraphed to me his congratulations.

That was a cut home, and gave me an afternoon's misery in feeling what he would feel when he had my letter.

The days slipped by, and I undeniably enjoyed them.

My inward, unbreakable decision, and the excited anticipation of having Naranyah with me, and our approaching escape from all interference and control, made everything acceptable and pleasant.

I had a few lines from her at intervals, and at last I heard she and the Geizais were coming to town for the last fortnight the latter would be in England.

Five days later I met them in Piccadilly.

It was in the afternoon. The place was very empty and hot and dusty, as it always is out of the season.

Webbs and I were walking up from seeing a stupid, semi-indecent picture of a woman that he had dragged me to see in one of

the side streets branching off. It had been a terribly stuffy place, I thought, to spend an August afternoon in.

A gallery of two rooms, each the size of one's hand, and the farther one in total darkness; one had to grope through two thick curtains to find oneself in a small place railed off, where eight or nine other men were standing, and behind which rose the great canvas, with a ring of lights like foot-lights round the base.

Webbs stood before it apparently enraptured, with his hands clasped behind his back.

I sat down on the red velvet fauteuil. I glanced round, and thought it funny there were no women present. Our women patronise everything indecent now. As I went out I noticed written up:—"Only men admitted." That accounted for it.

After waiting a reasonable time, I went up and touched him on the shoulder.

"What do you think of that?" he asked in an undertone, as he turned a little.

"It reminds me of the 6th Satire of Juvenal," I answered unguardedly, and was immediately called upon to quote the lines, next to translate them, then to point out where the allusion lay; and then Webbs

turned away with an oath, and said I was coarse.

I raised my eyebrows in silence.

"Well, look here, I will stroll up and down outside till you are ready," I said. "Don't hurry."

I went out, leaving him still absorbed. The picture did not interest me in the least, but it was a pity he should not enjoy it if he liked.

Well, it was after he joined me and we were walking back to dinner that, glancing up from the pavement, where my eyes had been for the few previous seconds, I saw Naranyah and her uncle's friend walking towards us. Naranyah was dressed in the correctest English fashion, and for the first time that I saw her, in an English hat; she looked extremely handsome I thought in it, like Aristippus whom *omnis color decuit*.

We both met each other's glance in the same moment, and I raised my hat to her, and then they passed and we passed.

"What a beautiful face that girl had," said Webbs, turning to look after her. "Do you know her?"

"Yes," I said, with an affectation of perfect indifference, flicking away a fluttering piece of newspaper with the point of my stick,

and feeling the tumultuous waves of blood beat back upon my heart at the sudden, unexpected meeting, and the praise from another man of what was my property.

"An Indian, eh? or some Asiatic?" asked Webbs. "But nothing that reminds you of soot there."

"She comes from one of the hot parts of India, too," I said, "Gujerat, south of the Indus. The tract where the ethnographers consider the traces of the aboriginal inhabitants are clearest; but I should think there must be more Aryan than Dravidian or Kolarian blood in her veins." And then suddenly remembering that Webbs knew and cared nothing about anthropological distinctions and ethnical boundaries, I changed the conversation.

The nine remaining days of her friend's stay went at last, and I had one line from Naranyah on the last morning, saying the vessel left Tilbury dock, 5.15; that she should see Geizai off and leave their rooms that same afternoon. I packed up all my things and left them in readiness to be merely called for, and in the afternoon I went down by Underground to Tilbury.

I knew the old place well enough, from having seen other fellows off to India, and

I could tell exactly where to find Naranyah as she came off the quay.

I met her just outside the station.

She seemed intensely pleased, as usual, to see me, but I thought she looked fearfully done up. I think the last few weeks shut up with the Geizais had been a great trial to her. Her whole body seemed to droop with fatigue, and she supported herself against the ticket counter as we stood for a minute in the booking-office.

"Now, what would you like to do, darling?" I said. "I have given up my place; say where we shall go."

"Let's go straight to some hotel," Naranyah answered. "I am heartily sick of the Geizai's rooms; they left them for me, do you see? But now we are to be together, aren't we?"

I thought a more pronounced shade of pallor came across her face, standing there in a side light, and I took her arm and led her on to the platform, where we could sit down till the train started.

We went up by train to Fenchurch Street, talking upon indifferent subjects, and from there took a hansom to drive across to the New Hotel, close to Trafalgar Square.

"Well," Naranyah said, as we rattled

along, "he has left me here, and I am to receive my allowance as usual. He thinks I shall study here. Of course when I write from Turkey or anywhere it will probably cease, when they find I really don't mean to come back; but even then I doubt whether they will go on pursuing me. I have eluded them and evaded them and outwitted them, as I did in India; they have absolute power on their side, no open resistance could avail. But was I not right, Francis, when I told you I was a wreck?" she said passionately. "A helpless, useless wreck, with no freedom, no will, no power. Absolute submission to their views and wishes, or else flight, secrecy, and cunning." And she laid her lovely head down upon my shoulder.

"Do you remember how they called me Justinian?" I said with equal passion and more bitterness. "I wish I were a Justinian, that I could strike medals, erect statues, raise temples, and found a city for you, give you an empire now, and make you immortal long after we are both dust and ashes."

"I have all the empire I want here," answered Naranyah, putting her hand for one second on my breast. "As for the

immortality," and her natural gaiety came back to her, "you must raise up the '*Monumentum ære perennius*' to me. Write a book or a poem about me some day."

We drove on, in silence the principal part of the way.

Just before we reached our destination, I took up the soft slender brown hand that lay passive on my knee, and slipped an English wedding ring over the third finger. She turned her eyes on me, and her whole sad, languishing soul seemed speaking in their melting shadows.

I went into the hotel and engaged a large room on the first floor, with electric light, and a couple of arm-chairs and a writing-table in it.

When I came down again, I found Naranyah sitting on the sofa.

"Francis," she said, as I came up to her, "I have ordered dinner, and I want to see that Opera Carmenoita; we can get there in time, can't we, afterwards?"

I looked at my watch.

"We can try," I said; "but we are not either of us in evening dress."

She laughed.

"What does that matter here? England's a free country."

I did not care a bit about the stupid opera, nor was I in the mood at all for anything of the sort, and I felt sure Naranyah was not.

One glance at her could tell me that she was superficially upset and excited with the strain of getting her uncle's friend safely off to India, and inwardly deeply moved by the solemn knowledge that we had cut the last tie to the Old life to begin the New.

But whatever our inner feelings are, our careless talk and actions have to go on the same.

"And there's a difficulty about getting seats, unless you take them beforehand," I suggested.

"There will be no difficulty," said Naranyah in a tone of command, looking straight at me; and I said no more. Had she wished us to go to the Styx, I would have gone willingly.

Our dinner was served at a side table—an ample dinner for four, of five courses; but we neither took much of it. Naranyah ate very little and drank nothing but water. But she seemed as gay and bright as ever. It was only now and then that my ear caught a tired drop of her voice at the end of a sentence.

The hotel was so near the theatre that I should have thought we might well have walked the distance; but Naranyah, with the carelessness of a person always accustomed to money, had ordered a brougham for us, and we got there less late than I expected.

I have never seen the Opera Carmencita, I had never seen it before, and I certainly did not see it then.

Beyond the footlights swayed a brilliant mist of light and colour, and the confused sound of the violins rose and fell on my ears.

My eyes hardly glanced towards the stage; they were fixed on the head and profile beside me.

Could anything be more intoxicating than the softness of that skin, so exquisitely fine and delicate in its texture? And there, just behind the ear, lay one short, soft lock of hair, curled round, and lying upon the neck like a ring of black silk. Could anything be more distracting than the upward curl of those dark lashes and the rich, lustrous eyes, as they gleamed and flashed in an answering smile or jest to me?

Could anything be more perfect, more alluring than the features as she looked

towards the stage, the outline of nose and brow and chin, the sweep of the thick eyelid, and the curled lips, red now with the warmth, folded one upon the other in decisive repose?

All the Englishmen had stared as she passed, and two or three heads in the seats immediately beside us had moved forward as she took her seat.

As always, she was absolutely unconscious, or else indifferent. Naranyah's hand lay carelessly on the low arm of the fauteuil. Mine as carelessly dropped on it, and the touch was as fire to fire. She turned towards me and met the glow of my eyes, full of the strength of my youth and my sex, the silent expression of a man's whole worship and adoration for something not of this world—the scorching passion of the intellect, in which everything unholy is suppressed and restrained, and the clear, fierce fire remains undimmed. How different from the ordinary transitory, physical desire and love for a woman, this fervour rather of a proselyte for his new religion, the enthusiasm of him who embraces a new faith, the exaltation of the martyr who pants to feel the knife, with his eyes fixed upon a Christ!

Between the acts we sat on; men went out on each side of us. Neither Naranyah nor I stirred.

At last the end came, the slight applause, the darkening of the house; and I helped her to put on her cloak, and we all moved towards the entrance.

As we passed through the well-dressed crush standing under the brilliant light, two girls, wrapped in their cloaks and swans-down, waiting by their chaperone till their carriage came up, raised their faces to me as we paused for an instant by them, seeking that admiration they were possibly accustomed to. They did not get it from me. Naranyah and I exchanged a glance of amusement and passed on to the hotel, and went slowly up the stairs to our room.

"Now, Francis, the thing's done," Naranyah said, when we had entered it, flinging her hat on a chair and pushing her hair off her forehead. She threw herself with intense fatigue on the bed, just beside where I was standing, and looked up at me.

The perpendicular vein on her forehead was swelled like a great cord, the lips quivered with strain and excitement, the pupils of the eyes had dilated enormously, giving that spiritual, supernatural look, as

if the soul were tearing wide its windows preparatory to a flight therefrom. It would be a startling, distressing look, did it not bring with it a convulsive, momentary hope that there was really such a thing as immortality, if one did not seem to catch a glimpse of the imprisoned soul within.

I looked into their strange, dilated darkness now, my heart beating, not with nervous fear at the fragility of the body, but with a wild, exultant joy that the divine Essence within was everlasting, immortal, incorruptible, and this not death itself could take from me.

If the trembling, uncertain spirit fled away at this instant through those luminous balls, one self-inflicted stab, and mine would be set free to follow it, join it, mingle with it, pass with it to the Eternal fields of light.

This was the sort of feeling that Naranyah's beauty inspired—a sudden, swift conviction that the realities of this life were not, and the unrealities, the imaginative, might be.

Through her eyes I seemed to catch a glimpse, through her lips a breath from the Other World.

Naranyah seemed utterly exhausted, and in

the moment of physical exhaustion the light of the mind burns clearest.

I bent over her and kissed her, and looked into those eyes, seeming to gaze into all futurity through her.

People would have called me mad ; perhaps I was so, perhaps all great happiness is a brief madness ; but there was no one present to see nor to judge, except the invisible Providence which, if it be present with us, must be all comprehending.

"Do you regret it?" I murmured, hardly conscious whether I said the words or whether they were merely an inward thought. I forget her answer, or whether she made one in words. I was in a state of mental intoxication, and as in mere intoxication the memory afterwards is but a dim, uncertain dream.

The next morning I left the hotel for the Webbs' after breakfast, to call for letters and my luggage. There were two letters for me, and one of them was from Turkey. As I drove back, I opened and read it.

"Could I come at once? (in blazing August). Was I a perfect master of colloquial Turkish? (No, I wasn't.) If so, I might have a secretaryship of £250 per annum." I leant back in the hansom, and fairly laughed aloud over the letter.

Brown was awfully sorry to hear I had failed, though he hadn't heard it! Thought he could get me something better later on, but anything in the Consulate service deuced hard to get, except in the regular way by examination. Finally, he'd always do his best to help me along, and be awfully glad to see me again.

"That will amuse Naranyah," I thought, putting it in my pocket. And then I got very serious again as my eyes wandered up the hot, dusty, deserted London street before me.

"How we have to pay for our pleasures in this world," I thought musingly.

It was rather a different position this having to beg a fifth-rate place from a friend, with no salary, in a beastly climate and sheer expatriation, from the flattered, petted First Candidate of the Indian Civil Service, who would be graciously asked to accept a first-rate appointment, and would be received with open arms by a circle of gratified friends and relations!

But it was worth it! Yes, ten thousand million times, I thought, as I recalled my feelings of last night when I had seen her eyes dilate, and the rapture of awakening that morning with her head upon my breast.

Worth it, and more than it multiplied by hundreds, and I do not think that there is any man in England who, feeling as I had felt then, would grudge the price I had to pay for it, any more than I did.

There might have been no other man in England who could have felt just as I had then, I admit.

I had been in the habit of eating little, drinking little, and sleeping little, while exerting and developing the mental faculties to their utmost for the last four years, and as a consequence I was easily thrown into a state of mental excitement and fervour.

Had I chanced to come across some religious faith at the college whose tenets had fascinated me, I should most probably have thrown my inflamed, excited mind, craving for stimulus, into that, and become a religious fanatic. Instead, I had met another human being whose intellect was uncommon and beauty almost divine, and my whole mind had gone out to it in an immoderate and extravagant worship.

Men at all times have had their idols, equally with their bodily gratifications, and Naranyah was mine, in living form instead of wood or stone or abstract creed, that was all.

Beauty of form never excited in me merely

the desire to ravish, consume, defile, but rather an intense reverence.

It was due, I think, undoubtedly, to my education, to the Greek literature, Greek ideas and views, with which I was imbued. The Greeks ranked Beauty, not amongst pleasure-giving attributes, but amongst the abstract virtues, side by side with Continence, Valour, and the rest. They regarded Beauty as a direct emanation from the supreme Divinity, and to be honoured equally with Virtue, and from Naranyah I expected not so much pleasure to myself as it gratified me to make her understand how much I loved her. And when the fundamental reverence is really there it becomes comparatively easy to restrain and\* eliminate all that might cause the passion to degenerate.

Self-control, self-restraint, hitherto for egoistical aims, had become so much a habit that it was not only no difficulty, but rather a pleasure, and to exercise it for a beloved object positive delight.

Who can doubt that the anchorite, starving in his cell for his abstract faith, feels in his mental transport double and quadruple and quintuple the rapture of Vitellius Cæsar feasting at his banquet ?

The monk controls his physical desire, and from the control comes ecstasy.

The gourmand gratifies his physical desire, and from the gratification comes satiety.

On Naranyah fell only the shielded light and heat of my passion ; in me and on me fed the fury and the flames, and I rejoiced to feel them.

Naranyah saw and felt and knew the intensity and force and violence of my feelings as she had felt them last night, but always through the screen of reverence and devotion and the submission of my will to hers.

As for myself, it is hard to convey to the uninitiated in this particular phase of passion, its marvellous stimulus, its exquisite excitement.\*

Unlike the love between an ordinary man and woman, which has its origin and roots merely in simple, natural, physical promptings, it was the highly artificial, amorphous growth of the intellect, suggested and fed by the mind, and as such possessed ten times the power and life of the simple, physical pleasures—for me.

I felt a new life beat in each vein and nerve as she merely approached me ; the simplest, commonest details of intercourse and intimacy with her gave me a passionate delight.

I folded my arms and leant back feeling at peace with all human beings for the sake of one.

After seeing my trunks up to our room, I went to find Naranyah.

I found her in the reading room.

"Any letters?" she said, laying down the "Lancet."

"Yes, and one from Turkey; you shall see it. Shall we take a walk?" I suggested, glancing round; the room was not very large, quite sufficiently small for all that we said to be heard by one or two people at least.

"If you like; I'll just get my hat."

A minute later and we were crossing the square. Naranyah read the letter through.

"It's not a very good thing; would it satisfy you, Francis? Is it better than anything you can get here?"

"Of course I could get the same thing as that here or anywhere," I said, looking down on the pavement. What I was thinking was that a post in Turkey might be preferable to one in England *per se*.

I knew the tremendous storm of talk and gossip and endless comment my refusal to enter the Indian Service would make amongst all my friends, relatives and acquaintances.

What step my father would take when he heard of it I could not tell. A not improbable one would be to commission some of his friends over here to bring me to reason, and at least to closely examine and enquire into my extraordinary conduct.

In any case I should most likely be hunted up by Wray from friendly interest, and by numerous others from mere curiosity, and then if they found us together what would they think?

Involuntarily I glanced at the sweet, delicate profile beside me. What would they think?

I might find myself landed in all sorts of enquiries, explanations, and a kind of court-martial before I knew where I was, and I could not say what the result would be.

If Wray, or any other deputation that called upon me, got it into their heads that my line of conduct was due to my "infatuation," as my father had called it, for Naranyah, they would strain every nerve to separate us. Naranyah's people might be communicated with, in fact I could not tell what might happen, and the risk was too great to run.

No, now that we were free, in the short breathing space allowed us, it would be

better to flee the storm we might not be able to face.

"I think I should like to go," I said at last, "for myself; but the decision rests with you."

"I shall be content and satisfied anywhere. I've told you the place makes no difference."

"Then as to funds for the present," I continued, "I have that fifty from Wray and a hundred my father gave me on my passing; it's at our bankers; that's all I have and shall have."

"You needn't bother about money," said Naranyah carelessly. "I can draw my allowance as long as I am here; that is eighty pounds a month, we ought to find that enough."

Eighty pounds a month! I was startled. I had not known the exact amount before. Twenty pounds a week! It was comparative wealth to her who had nothing but herself and her studies to spend it upon.

And she was going from that to nothing.

And I should have nothing myself to offer her but a miserable two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

A remorseful sense of horror swept over me.

Naranyah looked at me as I did not

answer, and then gave an ejaculation of disgust with herself.

"My stupid tongue! I did not mean to let you know how much it was," she said, reading my thoughts. "What a fool I am! You have become terribly white. What is the matter?"

I muttered something of my thoughts.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds a year! It is so little to offer you."

We had entered the Green Park by this time. Naranyah put her arm through mine, and turned her face towards me with uplifted eyebrows, and a faint smile upon her lips.

"My dear Francis," she said, with a slight pressure on my arm, and the least indefinable swaying of her figure towards me, "there are other things in this world besides comfortable rooms and expensive clothes. Would you give me up for any amount of money? No, you would not. Neither would I you. What have you to worry yourself about now?"

I looked down at the grass, kicking aside the dead leaves and whirling my stick round and round in my left hand. Owing to English education and habit, the expression of deep personal feeling in words was always unfamiliar to me. But an Oriental is never taught to be ashamed of speech and to

conceal all emotion, and Naranyah spoke on earnestly in a low tone, just sufficient to reach my ear :

“To be with you is the satisfaction of every sense, to possess the empire of your mind and brain is above everything else, far above that of Parogwar, with all its dancing girls and lighted gardens and crowds of subjects, and what not. When I was there, I had always that restless, unsatisfied craving for a companion, someone to share my thoughts; that hunger of the intellect that they could not understand; the life was all so empty and tedious, such a fine show, and nothing in it. How wearisome to stand upon that court daïs and look down upon the mass of moving heads beneath the lamps, and know not one there had a kindred thought. I used to be blind with tears as I looked upon it, and knew these empty spectacles would be my life. I was suffocated by the longing for another human spirit; I fled away, thinking I might find it in England, and I have. When we are together, our minds are free; when we are lost in some enthusiastic thought, what does anything matter? We love, and we have each other in our youth and our strength and our good looks. In the length and breadth of India, there is not one who

can love as you can. I like to feel this fire and know that it burns for me." She drew off her glove as she spoke and held her hand about half an inch above my bare wrist.

I was silent still. My mind was stirred in its very inner depths towards her, but propriety and decorum and publicity made any demonstration, even the least, impossible, and held me perfectly quiet with my eyes still upon the ground. Perhaps my silence and my pallor told her as much as words.

We went on without speaking.

"Well, that's quite settled then," Naranyah said, after a little, in an ordinary tone. "Accept the appointment, write and say you are coming, and we will go and see what happens."

We turned and walked slowly back, discussing how soon we could get away and what we had to do.

It was two o'clock when we reached the hotel. We lunched, and Naranyah ordered dinner at six, and a brougham as on the previous night, and then we went upstairs to write our letters.

I wrote to Brown my acceptance, and telling him I would start as soon as possible.

Naranyah wrote a long letter to India; she did not offer to show it to me, nor

did I ask her to. I felt sure the intimacy of our life must break down in time her ingrained habit of reserve, which was the only shade of barrier between us, and I was content to wait.

I gave her mine to read, saying :

"You know, I don't know Turkish as well as he evidently wants."

"Never mind, I do. You must cram it up from me in this next fortnight," Naranyah answered, and I fastened the letter.

We went to the theatre in the evening. It seemed to amuse Naranyah, and I was delighted to do anything she wished. We sat in the stalls as last night, and saw the course of fictitious passions on the stage before us, a strange sensation for us in our position.

In one or two of the thrilling situations we looked at each other instead of the scene with a half laugh, and I liked to see the contempt in the lovely youthful curl of the lips and see the amused mockery come into the dark eyes.

"Poor sticks, Francis," she said, as we were driving back. "They seem very fond of that word 'adore,' but I don't think they any of them know what it means. Come, now, you might give them a lesson."

She threw herself back beside me and put her feet up on the opposite cushions. There was a lamp in the back of the brougham, and she raised her face under it, full of caressing assurance and half arrogant beauty, she was so sure of what I felt.

There is a school of men who, after the most ardent desire, feel, or profess to feel, their honeymoon a period of disappointment and boredom.

All I can say is they must manage very badly. Probably the dissatisfaction arises from their exclusive thought of self, and the tiring effort to get as much pleasure for themselves as possible at the expense of their companion.

As a professed egotist for the previous years of my life, I can honestly say that I never had any real pleasure until now, when I was completely lifted out of myself by a great passion, the one great passion of my life; Myself for myself had ceased to exist.

My life now, side by side with Naranyah, was one of self-control, self-restraint, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice, to a great extent; but I was so thoroughly, so genuinely absorbed in considering what she would

wish, what she desired, what would please her, that I hardly noticed my own feelings. Hers became far more important to me than my own; and if I did suffer anything at times, it was recklessly crushed down anyhow to keep it out of her sight, and forgotten.

The daily habit of self-command in the veriest trifles and greatest desires of life had become a second nature with me.

It had been learned in the school of systematic egoism, to which it is as necessary as it is to the direct opposite, supreme unselfishness.

I had never sought my own pleasure, but my own benefit, and since as a general rule my wishes had been deleterious, either to my health or my aims, they had been almost invariably checked and suffocated.

Now, self-privation, where it was needed, came naturally to me, and I hardly felt it.

That my love should confer happiness and not misery upon its object was the idea that dominated all others and kept them all in crushed obedience, and in striving after this and seeing my success, my own pleasure came unasked.

Few men, perhaps, devote and exert  
N

themselves for their brides as I devoted and exerted myself for Naranyah.

Everything that a man can do to please, flatter, and gratify and make himself acceptable to a woman, I did.

Whether we excited much comment in the hotel, I don't know. Probably two young people staying alone, good-looking, apparently rich, and evidently wrapped up in each other, would excite comment anywhere, but mercifully we were surrounded by strangers and not by friends, and were perfectly free to act as we pleased.

The days slipped by uninterrupted from without.

Fortunately it was the dead season, and unusually hot, so that all the fellows I knew, and Wray and the rest, had got away from town and probably thought that I was away somewhere, too. I was terribly anxious to leave before the second week in September, before they would be back, and we decided to go about the third.

It was after we had been a fortnight at the New Hotel when my father's answer came.

I was alone, up in our room, reading Turkish.

Naranyah had gone to dine with some

one of her friends. It was a little after ten when the letter was brought to me, forwarded on from the Webbs.

It was a wonderful letter, quiet and calm, with every line and every word charged with the most bitter and cutting sarcasm, every sentence laden with a contemptuous sneer. As to facts, he utterly refused to have anything more to do with me, and had telegraphed to our bankers to stop my allowance.

Of my own free will and desire I had beggared and ruined myself, and he supposed I hardly expected him to own and support a son whose fittest place of residence apparently would be a lunatic asylum.

I read the letter through, and *laughed*—laughed to feel how impotent threat and menace and the biting lashes of satire were against a man submerged, overwhelmed, lost in the torrent of his own heedless, reckless passion.

I laughed at the vain effort in my father's lines to stir the old ambition; it was dead, dead as the grass that a flame has passed over.

"I might have been anything," he kindly allowed, "and I had chosen to be

a beggar." I leant my head down upon the mantelpiece. The words of Gray came back to me, that had stirred me so often at the college, when I felt my own powers move within me :

"Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,  
The threats of pain and ruin to despise ;  
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
And read their history in a nation's eyes."

Gone now the keen sense of ambition, lost in the same relentless flood that had swallowed all.

And what had I gained? Most men would have thought so little; and I laughed again as I thought how incomprehensible my pleasure would be to them.

Perhaps it needed Plato himself to understand one who was so wholly his disciple.

Plato, who thought the madness of love was the breath of a God, and excused and nullified all crimes.

Plato, who was really the apostle of Love, albeit it in its highest form, and who has come down to moderns as the apostle of Friendship!

One thing my father had not said to wound; he had not alluded to his own disappointment; not a word of sorrow nor of personal regret was in the letter, but I

knew he must be disappointed and this was the worst to contemplate. I folded my arms on my chest and began to walk up and down, my infallible consolation. I wonder how many miles I have got through in my life in this way, they must be many hundreds.

Naranyah was awfully late ; I glanced at the clock from time to time as I passed.

I was still walking up and down, thinking, when at twenty minutes past two she came in. I was up close by the door at the moment, and she almost opened it upon my motionless figure.

"Anything wrong?" she said, startled.

"Nothing," I answered impatiently. "Come in," and I pressed my hand on the panel of the door above her shoulder and shut it, and we walked into the room together.

I glanced at her under the light ; she was in evening dress and wearing a spray of forced violets. Her face was gleaming with gay animation, the quick flow of blood in the veins seemed to send a glow through the transparent skin ; the lips were moist and red and warm with the passing through them of the ardent breath, a half-finished smile was still trembling on them.

She took life so much more easily and carelessly than I did. It is a great gift.

Before I had spoken, her eye fell on the letter as she laid her gloves down; one swift glance at it and then at me, and the gaiety was dissipated in an instant. She looked at me searchingly for a moment, and then suddenly burst into tears.

I made a step forward to her and put my arm round her waist, more dangerously compressible and yielding than any English woman's, and drew her up to me, tears and all.

"There's nothing to distress you," I said hastily. "Nothing matters; you are the world, much more than the world, the heaven to me. Let all else go to hell; I don't care."

In that moment I kissed her less guardedly, less reverently, perhaps, than usual, and possibly bruised the mouth or the eyeball. She gave an exclamation of pain, and there was a struggle between us.

In that particular tumult of feeling, the effort to escape roused in me a savage fury. All the animal that I was rarely troubled with, but that I suppose existed in me still, as in all men, awoke at the moment; all that I loathed and abhorred with my

reason, all that I thought I had stamped out of myself, the cruelty, the tyranny, the brutality of passion, leapt up in me and pervaded my whole self.

Naranyah's strength was as nothing compared with mine, her resistance nothing to me ; she was built entirely for graceful beauty ; with my other hand I could have grasped her soft, swelling, pulsating throat and crushed the breath out of it in an instant ; with a turn of my wrist I could have bent back and broken any of her limbs.

For one frenzied moment the temptation came over me to kill her there in my arms, then there would be no escape, nor could she be ravished from me.

One instant, then the vile, execrable, animal cruelty was strangled and beaten down ; the divine love of the soul came back. With an immense effort I withdrew my arms and released her ; she stood free and unharmed. I apologised. She was pale and breathless, but there was not a shade of cowardice in her ; she was far too careless and heedless of self to know what fear meant. She would not have my apology.

"You hurt me for the minute, that's all," she said with a laugh, "otherwise you know always your wish is my wish." She spoke

meaningly, and looked at me, a love equal to my own shining in her eyes and melting them into their accustomed rapture of consent.

"I never wish to act like a brute," I answered in a low tone; and it was true. The sweat stood out upon my forehead, but I was quite calm now. It had passed, the horrible, jealous, selfish impulse. Naranyah was again the revered, sacred, inviolable idol of the mind.

"May I burn it?" she said, putting her hand upon the open sheet of paper.

"Yes," I said, "let's burn it," snatching it up with a laugh from the table, and holding it by one corner in the flame of a match; the thin sheet blazed up, and a wreath of red smoke curled round my hand. I flung it into the empty fender; in two seconds it was a square of black tinder.

"It was a pity after all to burn it," I said cynically, stirring and dispersing the ashes with my foot as I looked down at it. "It was a work of art, it would have done credit to a diplomat or a polemical controversialist. I want to get away, Naranyah, from here as soon as possible," I said after a minute. "We are nearly ready; let's make an effort

and go this week ; we might get tickets from Cook to-morrow. I suppose we shall go *viâ* Paris. Leave here on Sunday night, shall we ? ”

“ If you like, I am quite ready ; at least, when these things are put in,” and she glanced round upon her innumerable writing cases, silver inkstands, book-racks, tortoise-shell brushes, ivory paper-knives, etc., mostly my presents to her. She leant back in the arm-chair.

“ Do you see what time of night it is ? ” I said. I did not ask her where she had been, nor what she had been doing up till 2.20. I was not her guardian, nor her censor, but her lover, and I knew quite well she must and would have perfect liberty for herself. Besides, she was always perfectly free to act as she pleased, of course, with me.

“ One ceases to feel tired after a time,” she answered. “ I was tired at ten o'clock.”

“ Why didn't you come back then ? ” I asked.

“ I did want to, really, Francis, but they wouldn't let me go,” she said.

“ I can quite believe that,” I said, with a glance at her and a smile. “ Who would, willingly ? Just hand me over that dispatch

box, will you? Thanks. I don't think I need take all these old letters and rubbish with me. I had better look through them."

Two nights later we left for Paris, *en route* for Stamboul.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### TE DEUM LAUDAMUS.

A sky of ethereal blue that seemed itself pale with quivering heat over our heads ; golden air like the breath of a furnace round us, and Naranyah and I, standing side by side on the deck of the steamer, beheld the great city of Constantine.

Who can behold it unmoved ? But the emotion is generally impersonal sadness and regret, as the vision embraces the scene of the fallen mighty Empire that once swayed the world.

But I, who had come to it under such strange circumstances, as my eyes eagerly gazed towards it through the burning glare, felt nothing, knew nothing in that first moment, except my own wild, exultant, jubilant happiness. I envied neither Constantine who founded and built it, nor Mahomet II. who conquered it in all its wealth and beauty,

nor the hundred Cæsars who ruled over it ;  
I, who came to its streets a beggar.

I stood on the deck with my arm through Naranyah's, and felt my own heart swell and rise and expand in rapturous delight.

A wild, warm, buoyant gratefulness filled my soul and uplifted my lids in involuntary, irresistible thankfulness towards the faint, languishing sky over the ruined city of the past, where the eye seems to read the inexorable sentence, "*Sic transit gloria mundi.*" Yes, I thought, in reckless, careless, triumphant joy, let it pass ; a little while and I must also pass, but I shall have lived ! The surest test of our happiness is when we look upon the flight of time unmoved.

I had seen no one prior to our leaving England, told no one of it, written to no one.

I had left the talk and the gossip and the wonder and the condemnation to wear out behind me.

My name and my memory were left them to revile as they would. What did it matter ? What did anything matter ? We were together, and free.

I stood in a silent ecstasy as the steamer moved slowly over the calm water, feeling the unrestrained, exuberant waves of hope

and joy beat through every fibre more triumphantly each minute, as we neared the great triangle on which the former queen of cities stands, and saw clearly before us in the eye-splitting glare the rounded domes and cupolas and glittering minarets of the Turkish quarter rise against the fervid blue of the sky.

As we turned the Seraglio Point, entering the Golden Horn, my and Naranyah's eyes fastened eagerly upon the spherical dome and delicate spires of St Sophia, that rise above the buildings of the Seraglio.

Gliding up the harbour, we hardly glanced to the right hand where the European quarter lies, and where our interests might be supposed to centre, but both stood looking to our left, lost in that first gaze on old Byzantium.

It was only a question of minutes, for the instant the steamer touches the quay all is hurry, dust, noise and confusion. As we moved off the vessel with the other passengers we shook ourselves out of our trance, and I said to Naranyah :

"Would it be too much trouble for you to look after the luggage while I go up to Brown and find out what quarters we can get, and so on?"

"Not at all. I suppose you won't be long. Where is his place?"

"At Pera, up the hill somewhere; I shall get some of these gamins to show me the way. Brown must be well-known here."

I left Naranyah waiting to see our things brought off the boat, and threaded my way across the quay, which was dusty and evil-smelling, and crowded with bales of goods and wooden crates, and swarming with natives and Europeans of all nationalities.

I came across an intelligent, brown-faced boy on whom I thought I could practise my Turkish, and asked him if he would show me the way to Brown's residence. He accepted the offer I made him, and we left the quay and turned inland.

The walk up to Pera, or fashionable suburb, as it were, of Constantinople, from the shipping quarter of Galata, where the quay is, is long and steep, at least it seemed so to me then under that blinding, suffocating heat, as we wound through one narrow little alley after another. We came to the end at last, however. When we were fairly up the hill my guide stopped before a smallish house, similar to an ordinary English house, with a verandah round the front, and a small, neglected garden, where all seemed withering and parching under the pitiless sun, and informed me that

was our destination, took his money and departed.

I rang at the door, which was opened by a native servant, and then I was immediately shown into a room where Brown himself was seated at a table writing.

"Well, Heath, so you have turned up then?" he said, rising and shaking my hand. "I am very pleased to see you again; it's a long time now since I left England, four years or more—yes, about four years. What a tremendous height you have grown, and you are looking handsomer and better than ever, in spite of your misfortunes. Come, how did you manage that failure? You were a genius, you know, an unfolded genius at fifteen."

"There was no failure," I said with a laugh. "I passed First for the Indian Civil."

Brown stared at me without speaking, with his eyes quite round and his lips parted, and I had an opportunity in that moment of thinking how ill he looked, pale and overworked and care-worn, with faded eyes and stooping shoulders and threads of grey in his hair.

What has he been doing to himself? I thought.

"But why, then—I don't understand . . .?"

he gasped out, as he sank slowly into his chair again.

"I thought I should like Turkey better than India, that's all," I said, meeting his searching gaze with absolute unconcern.

"But have you considered?" he said rather vacantly, as if he could not realise it. "It means ruin."

"You don't seem very much ruined," I said smiling; "though I don't think you are looking well personally."

"Well, no, I am a little overworked just now," he answered, and then added, shuffling his papers on the table: "and I—I've married since I saw you last, Heath." He brought it out in the most shamefaced way, with a little pink flush like a girl's on his thin cheek, and then went on hurriedly: "I suppose you want to know what I can do for you. You see, it does not rest with me; the secretaryship is allowed by the Government to the Consul, if there is sufficient work for one, and the salary is fixed at two hundred and fifty pounds a year, as I told you." He spoke a little formally, as if he knew I had not told him my real reason for coming to Turkey. I drew my chair a little nearer the table, and said very earnestly :

"You did me many good turns when I was a lad of fifteen or sixteen, and now I am particularly in need of your friendship and help. If you can do nothing, of course that is one thing, but any little help or advice you can give will be acceptable. I have married, too, and I have my wife with me. She is only a girl, and an Indian."

"An Indian?" echoed Brown, in hopeless wonder. "My dear Heath, what a fellow you are! Like the Trinity, 'One Incomprehensible.'"

I laughed. Am I so very incomprehensible? I thought to myself. Wait till you see Naranyah, that's all.

"What do you want me to do for your wife?" Brown said good-naturedly.

"Well, that's why I want as good a post as I can get, not so much for myself as for her; and also I want to know of some occupation for her that would not grind the life out of her."

"Ah! . . . hum . . ." said Brown reflectively, looking at me. "Well, there is some native work now being done very badly. If you liked to take that in too, and divide the whole work between you, you could make thirty pounds a month; that's equivalent to three hundred and sixty pounds per

annum. It would give you both time to look round, at any rate."

"That will do very well for the present," I said, getting up; I was anxious not to keep Naranyah waiting an instant longer than was necessary. "And then, how about rooms or quarters? How does one live in a place like this—cheap?"

"Your best plan, perhaps, is to go back to the shipping quarter—you will find nothing cheap up here—and get a room or rooms at one of the small continental cafés there, where you can get all your food; that's the cheap way of doing it. There are the big hotels, of course, for those who can afford to pay for them; and then the residents generally get their own houses and servants, you know."

"Well, thanks, I'll see . . ."

"Look here," interrupted Brown, "you will come and dine with me to-night, seven o'clock, will you? It's a great treat to a poor devil out here to see an old friend from England."

"I should be awfully pleased if I were alone, but I don't think I can as it is," I answered.

"Bring your wife, too, if she likes to come," Brown replied.

"Thanks very much. And I suppose then I shall have the pleasure of seeing Mrs Brown?" I said as we shook hands, looking down into his woe-begone face with a smile.

"Yes," he answered good-humouredly, and we both laughed, and I went out again into the heat to hurry back to Naranyah. The sun seemed to dart up from the ground under one's lids and pour like a blistering liquid down the back of one's neck.

"A fitting place for me to find myself in," I thought as I descended the hill of Pera.

The fervid climate seemed to answer to the state of my mind, the scorching glare to correspond to the heat of my own passions, the quivering, glittering light over everything to represent the joyful animation that danced along my veins.

I went back to the quay and found Naranyah, and the rest of the afternoon passed in our search for even a tolerably comfortable place amongst the small hotels and cafés. We decided at last on a room in one of them, high up and small, "a miserable little dog's hole," as I said, but cheap. Naranyah cast her calm, soft gaze over the wretched contents of the room, very similar to that

of a third-rate English hotel, except, perhaps, in the matting on the floor, and said :

"It doesn't really matter, Francis. It will do."

We took some coffee in the café underneath, which abutted on the street ; the shade and the rest were grateful.

The street before us was not very narrow just there but irregular, without pavement, and sloping to a gutter in the middle. On the opposite side was a row of more or less dilapidated buildings, the roofs of which made a rugged, irregular line against the blue, and the ground floor formed small and, for the most part, dirty shops.

There was certainly no beauty, but a small amount of picturesqueness and novelty in it, and I saw everything with favouring eyes, as a man in my state will. Naranyah was beside me and therefore everything was *couleur de rose*.

That evening we availed ourselves of Brown's invitation, and found ourselves at his door a little before seven.

We were ushered into the same room as I had been in the morning, and Brown and his wife were both there.

She seemed an ordinary sort of woman ; what struck you most as you looked at her

was her state. She was enceinte, and looked frightfully ill and haggard, about a match for Brown.

I shall never forget the latter's expression when I introduced my companion to him, and his eye fell upon Naranyah's face under the light of the swinging lamps.

I left her to complete, by her voice and manner, the impression her looks had made upon Brown, and I devoted myself to our apparently suffering hostess.

At dinner, Brown sat at the head of the table with myself on his left and Naranyah on his right and his wife at the other end, but being an oblong table the two were nearly opposite me.

What a contrast they presented, those two! The rich, glowing, lustrous face of Naranyah beside the faded, sickly, pallid face of the wife.

The sun had been rather a trial to me, but Naranyah only seemed to glow and expand like a tropical plant in its native heat. To-night she seemed overflowing with sparkling gaiety and youth and health; there was not a line on the tranquil brow from the long eyebrow to the soft hair, not a shade nor a shadow anywhere on that brilliant countenance. And I looked, and my heart

was unfeignedly thankful within me. I had been able to satisfy her. The life with me for the last month must have been pleasant ; I had devoted myself wholly to making it a success, and her face told me it had been, and I rejoiced.

All these thoughts sloped athwart my brain and pushed themselves in where they could while I talked to Brown and his wife.

I saw Brown looking and looking at Naranyah as he sat beside her, where he would catch full face, three-quarter face and the profile, which the real favourite of Justinian might have envied. And then his eye would pass on to the poor, feeble, care-worn face beyond with which he had burdened his dinner-table for life.

I don't know whether he envied me ; I know I did not envy him. After dinner we all went into the little drawing-room on the same floor ; it was very English ; it is wonderful how John Bull preserves his identity everywhere.

The window on to the verandah stood open, but it seemed frightfully hot, otherwise, but for the atmosphere, it might have been any little room in Brook Street, with its ricketty, taffeta-covered ottomans and chairs

and tiny tables under the subdued light of a shaded lamp.

Mrs Brown moved painfully across the room to a couch by the window.

Brown was turning up the lamp.

Naranyah's gaze and mine both followed the laboured step, and then we caught each other's eye in a faint smile.

Just at that moment the door was pushed open and two children, pale little creatures of perhaps three and two, came in. The elder of them made straight for my ottoman, and clasped both hands round my knee:

"You not puppa, are you?" it said, looking up at me, or some equally idiotic remark like that. I stooped down and took the child by the shoulder, making it leave go its hold and setting it away from me.

"Come here, darling," cried its mother; "you mustn't be a tease."

I glanced across to where Naranyah stood near the window by Mrs Brown's couch. As the child came running up I saw her bend her tall, slender figure over it and lift it in her arms and kiss it.

The child screamed in gratified delight and buried its tiny hands in her hair.

"I like you, you bootiful," it squealed, and then tried to catch her eyelashes and tug at

those, as with it still in her arms she sat down on one of the chairs by the sofa.

"You don't like children, Heath?" said Brown to me.

"No, I don't. It seems so horrible to think that we were once in that state of idiocy and inanity, and if we live long enough we shall return to it. Children seem to me to disgrace and degrade the human species like the drunkard and the imbecile. In all three the intellect is absent, and therefore they are repellent. If I could I would have all children locked up and never seen until they were fourteen, so that no one could take a child and say: 'This little imbecile will one day be a man,' and, worse still: 'Every man has once been a little imbecile like this.'" I spoke in a low, quiet tone, and Brown was close to me, so that the words would not reach the mother who was beaming upon Naranyah and wholly occupied with the child's antics.

"But they are so innocent," murmured Brown, looking over to where Naranyah sat, with a troubled air.

"Innocent!" I repeated contemptuously. "And what worth is innocence *per se*? Rats are innocent in the same way. Men can be in their powers and capacities almost equal

to gods, but it is only through the mind that you can obtain a representation of divinity."

Brown looked at me in perplexity.

"You always were such a funny fellow, you never seem to take the view other people do of anything."

I leant back with a half-smile, and said in my sweetest, apologetic tones:

"You won't be offended, Harry, I was only expressing a general opinion. Your children are no more painful to contemplate than others, you know."

Brown laughed faintly and looked from my light-hearted, mocking face to the beautiful form in the chair opposite us.

I think our coming had stirred some of the old chords which had all been quivering when he had left England and his Greek and his Philosophy, four or five years ago.

I think he felt some dim consciousness of there being some pleasures in the world which, if not so comfortable and so useful as domestic ties and the fertile Mrs Brown, could be more ecstatic and divine.

Tea was brought in then, and after that Mrs Brown left us to see the two darlings safely into bed, and Brown invited us into the verandah.

There were two comfortable wicker chairs there like deck chairs, and Brown brought out a third low one for Naranyah and put it between us. The night was quite still, and we sat and talked and laughed, and smoked Turkish tobacco under the Turkish stars.

It came out in the conversation that last summer had been very unhealthy, that the two former secretaries had died, the one of dysentery and the other of fever; that Brown had been invited to Therapia in the hottest month, but being weighted by his family had not been able to manage to go.

In answer to some remark of mine upon this Brown declared that one day I should very likely have a family myself.

"No, quite impossible," I said, laughing, with my arm loosely resting on Naranyah's shoulder as she sat beside me.

Mrs Brown reappeared just before it was time for us to depart. Brown saw us down the garden, and then Naranyah and I took our way towards the café, down the steep gradient of the Grande Rue, arm in arm under the starlit sky. There was a gutter down the road towards which sloped the round, uneven stones, and we amused ourselves like a couple of school-boys by trying which

could most successfully push the other into it.

We looked into the café as we passed to the narrow side staircase that led up from the street to the rooms over it. It was lighted up and filled by a crowd of men of various dresses, colours and nationalities, drinking, smoking, gossiping and gesticulating to one another. There was a row of benches outside which were also occupied by loafers in loose, coloured coats and the prevailing fez, sitting and lying on them in every attitude.

I felt Naranyah half-pause as we passed and looked in at the entrance.

"Would you like to go in?" I asked.

Naranyah laughed and shook her head, and we went on up the narrow, steep, uneven stairs. It was quite dark and suffocatingly hot, and there was a scent of oil upon hot iron and burnt fat from the café below.

When we opened our door, a hot, close air seemed to meet us; it was pitch dark inside.

"Have you any matches?" Naranyah said, turning to me. I gave her my case, and she struck one. As the light blazed up we heard the click, click of the big Turkey spider as he scrambled out of sight,

drawing his legs behind him over the matting.

"They remind me of those Greek spiders of Xenophon," I said, following one to its corner with my eyes.

"Whose bite was less maddening than the sight of beauty, eh?" answered Naranyah, lighting the lamp. "Look how this thing smokes."

I came up and turned it down, but up or down a long streamer of smoke went up to the ceiling.

"You may as well let it alone: it doesn't matter: it will smoke," said Naranyah, with Asiatic resignation.

I set both sides of the window open and sat down on the chair by it. The night was lovely, the sky brilliant. A rising moon shot a faint light on to the blank brick wall of a building opposite, but we as human beings, and poor ones, were condemned to the inside of a wretched pen like this.

"What a place to have brought her to!" I thought with horror, and I dared not look at her, dreading to see her face full of disgust and discontent.

Naranyah came up, however, and balanced herself on my knee, for the simple reason that

there was only one chair, and I had it, and I was forced to turn to her.

"To think I brought you to this!" I said, with my eyes full of self-reproach.

"I am much happier here than anywhere else," Naranyah answered, laying her head back on my shoulder to look up at the sky.

"No one but you loves me enough."

"And I love you too much, and this poverty is the result," I answered in an agony of remorse.

"And," said Naranyah, raising her swimming eyes, filled with the awful and holy mystery of a divine passion, while the dingy lamp flared up to the low ceiling and the drunken shouts and gabble came up from below, "this Delight."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ART OF LOVE.

"Take not from me nor cripple the art of love."

—PLATO.

ONE week passed and then another of our life at Constantinople, and I was still as joyful and thankful as when we first landed.

I had been successful in carrying out the main desire of my mind, and that was strong enough to eclipse all else.

The life itself was full, like most human existences, of small discomforts and vexatious trifles ; the work was hard and the hours long, from nine till seven, and passed in the sickly heat of an office room close under the tin roof ; the pay was poor, and everything dear to buy, and one month's money would disappear before the next was due.

I soon found I had to give up both wine and cigarettes, or I should have consumed more than my share of our pay. Naranyah

cared for neither, but smoking had been an inveterate habit with me from childhood, and to give it up suddenly and utterly was a trial, as much as any of such trifles can be.

Then, also, when two people whose means are limited live together, there must be one who submits his will and sacrifices his comfort and pleasure when a divergency of taste or opinion presents itself, and I had resolved that I was to be the one.

Naranyah was too unselfish and too fond of me to allow it if she knew it, so that I acquired the habit of anticipating and foreseeing a conflict of desires in the daily trifles of life, and subduing and breaking down my own to meet it. We limited ourselves to two meals a day, all we could afford. I had been accustomed to dine late, and for myself I should have arranged my two meals at eleven and seven, but from previous knowledge of Naranyah's tastes I was aware that she never cared for anything to eat certainly after five, and needed food early in the morning, so since she was the only person to be studied, I made the, to me, annoying arrangement of breakfast at seven and dinner at four.

At seven in the morning I could never eat nor drink anything, then from eleven to one a faintness and desire for food would arise,

this, not being gratified, would pass away in the interest and excitement of my work, and by four there was no appetite nor inclination to break off work for dinner.

Then I would rather have waited till the evening. However, if I had even hinted to Naranyah my view, she would have changed her hours, and then the discomfort would have fallen upon her ; and after all, irksome and hateful as it was, it was still a trifle.

I was always on the watch to gather up as far as I possibly could, these petty disagreeables of life and take them myself, to avoid their touching her, and, as I say, I found plenty. Naranyah had another habit of always sleeping with a light in her room, which became the cause of an almost incredible amount of physical suffering to me. Of how much value the light was to her I don't know, I was afraid to ask ; because, as with the dinner, the least suspicion on her part of my dislike to the lamp would have resulted in her pitching the whole box and dice through the window, and lying in darkness that perhaps was intolerable to her. These things only press upon the poor.

In London, where we had been rich, we had simply kept the electric light burning all night ; but here there was no means of lighting

the room except by these small oil lamps, which smoked and smelt beyond all belief, filling the room with an acrid, stinging, drying atmosphere that seemed to produce no effect upon Naranyah whatever.

It dried and burnt my throat and seemed actually to choke me ; it stung and scorched round my eyes, and made my head ache and throb, as the fumes of charcoal will.

I used to lie awake for hours wondering how I could manage the horrid thing without actually putting it out, but still I used to fall asleep in the end. And this, too, was a trifle.

I had given up a great deal for Naranyah, and I would have been tortured and flayed for her willingly if there had been the necessity ; and I was hardly foolish enough, at the same time, to allow these little things to spoil our life together.

Ah ! It becomes so easy, when one really loves, to make everything simple and smooth for the other ; to manipulate the mechanism of life so that it does and shall work well. So easy to starve and to work and to sacrifice. Forethought and self-denial and the checking of one's own wishes becomes such a simple, common, daily habit.

And our life in this way did flow smoothly.

Naranyah kept well and was always in the gayest spirits, and personally I was fully content and satisfied. I asked and desired nothing more of Fate.

Our friends and acquaintances were few. The English clergyman held aloof from us because we really could not victimise ourselves by going to Church on the one precious holiday we had in the week; and I asked Brown not to bring me nor my name before the notice of any of the members of the diplomatic circle, as I was so likely to come across some friend of my father.

So that the society reduced itself pretty much to Brown and the English doctor and some of the student interpreters—a class of well-educated young fellows finishing their studies in Turkish, the reserve from which the Consular Service is replenished.

That society which came in our way and was agreeable we took, and it made a relief: just the amount of neutral setting to throw up the warm tint of our life in each other.

We sufficed and more than sufficed unto ourselves.

On the Sundays, those glorious, golden Sundays under the laughing blue of the Turkish sky, we used to walk over to Ortakoy, a village only a mile or two off,

and from there pass on by water to the other villages that lie beyond the promontory.

Seated in one of the long caïques with Naranyah lying lazily beside me, balancing a large paper fan over her charming head, and the sparkling, dancing waters of the Bosphorus lapping at the sides of the boat, the soft, easy hours went by uncounted and unregretted.

Naranyah was a marvellous companion, as I had found out at the college, and the flow of her ideas and her unrivalled power of conversation, was a perennial fund of entertainment for me.

She had united the culture of both continents ; she had drunk in all the imaginativeness and warmth of the Indian literature, all the mystical extravagance of Oriental philosophy, and superadded the ordinary classical and English education. How she had acquired so much besides all her medical knowledge may seem mysterious to the British youth who spends tens of years in learning to spell out his Latin and Greek ; but the Indian intellect is powerful, works rapidly and develops rapidly, and probably Naranyah's brain, now towards eighteen, was at its maximum brilliance.

Sometimes in those nights of Stamboul,

when it was too hot for either of us to sleep, she would sit on the edge of the charpoy and talk in the most exquisite strain over the tenets of Plato, and compare the transparent sophistry of the Greek with the incomparable logic of the Vedants, and I used to lie gazing at the wonderfully small head, outlined against the dim and dirty white-washed wall of the low and smoky little room, and wonder whether it was her beauty or her intellect enchained me most.

Anyhow, my idolatry grew.

I am quite aware that to many men the discussion of abstruse problems and theories would have been quite as tedious as the consideration of the spots on their fox terrier pups and the details of the last cricket match to me.

But this was what both Naranyah and I recognised, that we were so pre-eminently fitted each for the other. It would have been an impossibility for us to have met and not have loved.

The days of the bright, happy winter passed, and then it began to grow hotter; unfortunately, it was an exceptionally hot season. The days while I worked in the office were frightfully hot, and for us there was no relief; the nights seemed even worse,

the mosquitoes woke up, too, and tormented us, and still the thermometer, nailed inside the window, went up and up.

One night it reached 100 degrees.

Naranyah lay upon the charpoy with both arms outstretched, and the sweat rolling off the palms of her hands. During the last few nights I had given her up the charpoy and made up a bed for myself on the floor. I had professed, of course, that I liked it better and that it was my wish, or she would not have let me do it. Certainly a bedstead, however low, ricketty and small, is preferable to the floor, as it lifts one a little from the spiders and other filthy animals, with which one shares one's apartments in the East. However, I had to let them crawl upon me as they would. I could not help it. .

As she lay there silent, I went up to her and asked if I could do anything for her, and for the first time since we had been in Turkey she met my eyes with weariness in her own.

"No. I am tired. Say and do nothing."

She said no more. She made no movement, and closed her eyes.

I retreated and flung myself upon the mattress and thought: Could I not possibly

set up a punkah? Naranyah evidently did feel the heat now, more than I thought.

She was habitually silent upon all disagreeable topics. It was never Naranyah that said the work was hard, or the food was bad, or the place hot.

If she were ill and actually suffering, you might live with her a week and not know it till some chance circumstance revealed it.

She never complained about anything: it was not her way. To accept, and accept in silence, the ills of this life seemed to come naturally to her.

Since, when I have heard Englishwomen grumble and complain, and make their trembling servants and everybody else in their vicinity thoroughly wretched over the merest trifles, I have recalled with wonder the amount of discomfort and annoyance and suffering that Naranyah went through daily at Constantinople, without a word upon it passing her lips.

There was perfect silence, except for the ping-ping of mosquitoes through the room; not a breath of new air visited our smoky, siccated atmosphere. I lay looking up at the ceiling, mentally arranging my punkah and where the hooks should be.

"Francis," she said, after some time.

"Yes," I answered, raising myself upon one dripping elbow and arm.

"You are not annoyed at what I said, are you?"

"My dearest, sweetest love! Of course I'm not. How could anything you did or said annoy me?"

She did not say anything to that, and there was another interval of silence, and then her even, regular breathing told me she was asleep. When I was sure of it, I got up and looked at her. She was in a bath of perspiration, the same as I was myself, and the mosquitoes clung to her throat and chest and arms.

Why don't you come and feast upon me, you brutes? I thought.

I looked down upon her with a supreme sense of happiness, a rapturous consciousness of pleasure.

She was as beautiful, if not more so, than when I saw her asleep at Ventnor, and infinitely more dear; and I stood as then, with folded arms, but instead of the struggling agony of indecision within, there was a divine, delighted calm. Not the peace of the vacant mind and impulses asleep, but the ecstatic trance of an intensely stimulated brain, wrapt in the excess of its own excitement, like a chord that, tightly stretched, quivers up to

a certain point, but at the extreme point of tension is absolutely still.

As I looked, a vague feeling of awe stole over me, a solemn, warning voice seemed borne in upon my mind that she was only lent to me for a little time by Fate; she was my heaven-sent guest—for a little while.

I was afraid to stand beside her long, lest the lengthened gaze might awake her to the sense of heat and smoke and bite of the insects. I passed on and scrutinised the thermometer. It had gone up to  $102\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ .

The next evening I devoted to setting up the punkah. Naranyah had gone up to Brown's, and I was glad. I had up the landlord of the café, a dexterous Greek, and got the hooks I had ordered in the morning fixed in then and there. Then, with his help, I fastened up the punkah itself over the charpoy. It was a very simple one that I had manufactured myself in an hour, but it answered every purpose. I made the Greek stretch himself on the mattress in the corner and pull the string, and I found a delightful air swept over me on the charpoy.

Then I insisted on having some mosquito curtains. The Greek professed he knew nothing of such things. "Stuff!" I said; "in a climate like this there must be mosquito

curtains. Bring me a set, without a hole, mind, and there's this for you."

He went away grumbling. However, he did return with the curtains after a long while, and we fixed them round the bed so that not a mosquito even could outwit us and creep in.

When we had finished, I thanked him, and he retired. I went up the hill to Pera.

After this I am sure Naranyah slept better.

Of course there was a tremendous disputation between us about the pulling of the punkah, as if it had been one of the labours of Hercules, or rather I might say, the whole thirteen combined.

Naranyah used to swear each night she would pull the whole thing down rather than know I had the fatigue of working it for her. I used to declare that it was only twenty minutes or so before she fell asleep, and that it was no fatigue to pull the string of a light punkah like that for twenty minutes, and that, in any case, I could never go to sleep at eleven o'clock as she did, so that I might as well pull it as not.

Naranyah was not fully satisfied. However, the physical strength was all on my side, and she could not prevent me working the punkah if I chose.

And I prevailed upon her to accept it at last and to fall asleep tranquilly, protected by the net curtains and fanned by the punkah.

I can never stand the breath of a punkah now.

In the deadening, sickening heat of the plains of India, never a punkah sways over my dining-table, nor in any room of my house; it brings back upon me too vividly those hot, happy nights in Stamboul, when I used to lie on the mattress, supported on my elbows, pulling the string of Naranyah's punkah, and reading Hafiz or Fuzuli as well as I could by the unsteady light of the lamp, and interrupted continuously to remove a hairy spider or brush off the mosquitoes.

It used to be a good deal of fatigue sometimes, with the thermometer standing at 102 and 103, and I used to change arms pretty constantly as the hours wore on; but physical fatigue, like all other physical sensations, passes almost unnoticed if the mind is sufficiently fixed upon its aim.

I always think those old disciples who fell asleep over their prayers could not have been very devout.

Anyway, I never once fell asleep over Naranyah's punkah, and since I was habitu-

ally hungry and thirsty, and tired, and overworked and underfed, I think it must have been that the spirit was more willing, not that the flesh was less weak. The weather continued unchanged. It was a very dry season. A brazen, burning sky hung over the city day after day. One evening Brown sent a message to me that he wanted to see me at once.

I went up to his house, and found him looking more harried than usual.

"Look here, Heath," he said, "you can help me if you like. There's an agent of ours, an Englishman, down at Adrianople; he's laid up with fever and wants to go away; in fact, he's no good there. Can you go and take his place for a time?"

"I don't mind," I answered, "if it will be a convenience to you. But how about the work here?"

"I can get it done by natives here, where I have them under my own eye, for a time, at any rate; but I must have somebody good to replace Harley. Could you go to-morrow, say, or the next day?"

"I have Naranyah with me," I said, thinking.

"Well, but I suppose you are not inseparable, are you?" Brown answered peevishly.

"How long should I be away?" I asked.

"I don't know, I am sure. How can I tell? It depends on how soon Harley gets back, or he may go out."

"If I can take Naranyah with me I'll go whenever you like, not otherwise," I said.

Brown looked very cross.

"I can't see what you want her for, there's nothing for her to do. Harley has managed the work alone for years, so I am sure you can, and she would be so useful to me here now there's such a press of work; she is worth the whole pack of natives, she can do anything, she is invaluable; you really must leave her."

Yes, I thought, a likely tale! Leave Naranyah here in the blazing heat with the work of two men on her shoulders, to be ground down, and have her brain and her talents overtaxed and abused for your convenience.

Naranyah, the most precious thing on earth to me.

"I am very sorry," I said amiably. "You must reduce the pay, that's all. Naranyah must come with me if I go."

"It's positively ridiculous," answered Brown, with an oath. "I never heard of anything so absurd, that you can't leave this girl for a

week or two, when it's a matter of importance. It's simply monstrous. One would think you were . . . . ."

I was standing in front of Brown's table looking at him, and he pulled up in time. I was silent. I never argue where there is no necessity.

"Pay me half you used to pay Harley," I said quietly, after a minute, "and devote the surplus to providing natives here to do the work. That is, if you really wish me to go."

"Well, I might arrange it like that," Brown answered sulkily, after a long pause. "You can have the same as you are drawing here, and then there is a commission, which is extra. But I think it's great nonsense that you can't go alone."

I volunteered nothing to this, and after hearing some particulars of my work and what I should have to do, I left.

"Perhaps Naranyah won't like the change," I thought, going down the hill. "If she doesn't, we won't go at all, that's all."

However, when I spoke to her about it, she was evidently pleased. Her nature was one of those restless, unsettled, careless ones to which a change of scene is always pleasant.

We gave all our things into the charge of the café-keeper, told him we might soon be

coming back, and on the following day transferred ourselves to Adrianople.

There is no doubt that we were better off here. Harley had been a resident for five years, and had made the house he had occupied, and that we were now to use in his place, as comfortable as an English one. It stood in a small garden withdrawn from, but facing the principal road, and gleamed white and cool in front of a grove of cypress trees.

It was only one storey high, and the door-like windows opened on to the invariable verandah.

A very jolly little place for solitude *à deux*.

Harley had left one native servant there, and we had no bother. The work, as Brown had said, was quite manageable by one, so that shared by two it was really nothing, and Naranyah got more rest and more sleep, and more comfort altogether.

It was as hot, if not hotter than in Constantinople, but then the rooms were much cooler and larger, and we felt the heat much less.

Naranyah ordered our life as she pleased, the hour of our rising, when and how we dined, whether we had one servant or more, how much we worked in the day, where we went and how we amused ourselves in the evening.

Every action, in fact, was dictated and ruled by her caprice of the moment. I did not care about anything, which way it was. I was wholly and solely given over, and delivered bound to my soul's one passion, with no will nor desire, almost no consciousness of lesser things.

It was a state of unnatural excitement in which I lived, but excitement was the breath of life to me and the atmosphere in which I prospered. I had awoken now to live, and I lived unsparingly. What did it matter if I exhausted and used myself up now in these happy hours, in this mental and cerebral fever, in this fervour and delight of the soul?

For the first time in my life I was living in the present, and utterly heedless of the future.

I knew I had never lived before, I felt I should never live again if this tie were ruptured. I was *l'homme qui n'a pas de lendemain*. Now was the accepted time to enjoy what the gods had given.

There was much more levity here than at Constantinople, here where there was ease and idleness to back up the spirits of eighteen and twenty.

To Naranyah it was a fund of amusement to see me tremble at a contraction of her

brows, to subdue me by a flash of her eyes and make me pale at an inflection of her voice.

Her moods were as varying as the lights and shadows on her face, and in some of them she was not, or professed she was not, amenable to any of my wishes; and it was fun then to tease and provoke her to the last limit of petulant resistance, and then, before I went too far, to suddenly drop the light joking and let her see that she was not in reality my toy, and that this was merely the result of overflowing good spirits and irrepressible lightness of heart and merriment.

And then to plead most humbly and seriously to be taken back into favour which, after a long time of the most charmingly provoking sulks, Naranyah would invariably do, with her yielding, seductive smile, and grant whatever had been the cause of our original contention; which was ten times more valuable to me from being so long denied, and pleasure to her from being so persistently entreated.

The weeks that we passed there were for me cloudless; a circle of jewelled hours set in the gold of a great content.

And looking back upon my life, there is no time in it in which I was so worthy in

my own knowledge, as then, when I was under the influence of a great passion.

Socrates advised his disciples when they had seen a beautiful face to go into banishment for a year; doubtless the advice was suited to the recipients.

In me this same sight of beauty, and that which it had given birth to, had roused all that was best in my nature, and led me into a life that I could never have lived under other circumstances.

It taught me the great secret that religion tries in vain to teach, to ignore myself, to live wholly for another. It taught me to check and repress everything that is unpleasing and unedifying in the human being.

Living with Naranyah hourly and momentarily was for me like a fanatic living under the physical and visible eyes of his god. And the guard was kept not only on word and action, but on thought.

In the close communion in which we lived, gradually there became hardly any individuality, any privacy of thought.

Often between us words and actions were absent, and thought seemed to pass and repass almost without expression, and therefore that also was not my own.

Enslaved! Yes, all that was low and vile  
Q

and selfish was enslaved, and all else left free.

Her presence was a perpetual stimulus to the intellect and to the desire to please, the desire to be always in the very best and highest phase possible to me.

I know that to some men the continuous spur would be intolerable, that if they welcome their higher moments and can sustain them for a time with a superior companion, there returns still the inevitable desire to sink, and either to drag their companion with them, or to flee that they may sink in secret.

But on me the restraint never pressed, the burden never weighed; the perpetual effort to be as nearly perfect, in her eyes at least, and towards her, as a man can be, was the pleasure and excitement of my life.

There was no doubt that the insecurity, the uncertainty of our position added to its fascination, increased the stimulus, preserved the zest, knitted yet closer together the two clinging, cleaving, passionate existences which were conscious that they would never again find in this world what they possessed in each other.

I knew that any hour might be the last that I should possess that præterhuman beauty that seemed to carry me above and beyond

the limits of the world, as the beauty of an Agathon or a Callias carried Plato.

She knew that any night might be the last that she would pass beside one whose soul had learned to exist only to worship her, whose body only breathed for her pleasure.

We knew we were against all the world and at some moment the world might prove too much for us.

Her people might at any moment be following her, and though we were both prepared to fight to the last, we might only be able to secure a common death.

The consciousness of uncertainty could not throw a shade on the bright present, it only gave, as I have said, an intenser, wilder, keener appreciation of it—added to the charm of what we had that charm which belongs only to things we are about to lose.

I was prepared for a desperate struggle one day, and it was to this quarter that I looked for danger—Man's interference.

Why, why did I not remember the solemn warning of Euripides:—

πολλὰι μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων  
πολλὰ δ' ἄλειπτως κραινοῦσι θείῃ  
καὶ τὰ δοκηθεῖτ' οὐκ ἐπιγίγνηται  
τῶν ἄδοκῆτων πόρον πῦρ τοῖς

One evening I was in the dining-room

copying out an official letter into Turkish, Naranyah was outside leaning over the verandah rails; a clear, soft, red gleamed through the cypress trees and behind the towers and minarets beyond. I was just finishing the letter when I heard Naranyah's voice in conversation, and a minute later she stepped into the room with a paper in her hand.

"There's a note for you, just come," she said.

"Open it then," I said, without looking up, "and see what it is." And I went on writing.

The silence lasted so long that at last I looked up. Naranyah had the letter in her hand and she looked very grave.

"What is it?" I asked. "Whom is it from?"

"Brown. He wants one or other of us to go back to Constantinople at once; our substitute has gone."

"Fiddlesticks!" I said. "That's a ruse of Brown's; he thinks there is not enough work here for two, that's all."

Naranyah said nothing. She stretched out her hand and ignited the paper in the lamp and flung it on the ground.

"What did you do that for?" I exclaimed

in momentary vexation. "I hadn't even seen it."

Naranyah put her hand on my head.

"Did you want to see it? I am fearfully sorry. I am afraid I can't resuscitate it now. I did not think about it."

I was rather annoyed. It seemed such a silly thing to do, and had Naranyah been my wife I should have told her so. However, I remembered whom I was speaking to and only said, as gently as I always spoke to her:—

"No, I wish you would think a little more about what you do," and went on writing.

Naranyah was quite silent.

When I had finished the letter I looked across to her; she was leaning on the table gazing at me.

"One of us must go back there at once," she said seriously. "It's absolutely necessary. Brown hasn't a single person there to do the work and if we neither of us returned he would only go on worrying us, and perhaps cancel our appointment altogether."

"But how is it?" I said. "When we left he had a whole stack of people, who did well enough under his eye, as he said. Where are they all?"

"I don't know. Hot season, I suppose

they have left. I can tell you when I am there."

"Oh! Do you intend to go then?" I asked.

"I do," she answered, with the calm resolution of five-and-thirty.

"And I am to remain here?"

"Yes," she answered absently, as she might have done to her kitmagar.

I bit my lips. I was not accustomed to be spoken to like this. My views, wishes and opinion not even asked nor consulted. I was her slave, and she knew it, but generally the imperial commands were veiled a little more than this.

The blood rose to my face with involuntary surprise and anger; but in a flash I remembered that the fact that she was perfectly free and that I was at her feet, that she had only to order and I to obey, was the lesson I had been trying to teach her for the last nine months, and that it would be ridiculous to be vexed now that she had learnt it.

Besides, if the fact were there, why should I mind the open expression of it?

If I were really only anxious to carry out her will, why should I be annoyed at her taking it for granted? It was absurd. All this flashed across me, and I kept my eyes

fixed upon the table in silence, afraid lest against my will I should betray in my look or tone the feeling of resentment before it could be crushed out.

Her tone had hurt me deeply ; she knew from me she had only to ask and to have, and therefore there was no need for her ever to speak like this.

Still, if she chose to, it was not for me to resent it.

When I was quite sure that my face was pale and calm again, I raised my head. My heart beat as my eyes met her lovely face bending over the table, and close to mine.

"Are you so anxious to go back, and for us to be separated?" I said, looking at her with a faint smile.

A warm light seemed to spring up in the dark, sensitive eyes.

"No. Oh, no, no! How can you think that? Only, what's to be done? One of us must go."

The tone was as soft and caressing as always, and each word weighted with emotion.

"And why shouldn't it be I?" I asked, still looking up into the warm, brilliant face.

I thought I saw a shadow almost of fear pass over it, and then she said hastily :

"I couldn't possibly stay here without you,

alone in this place; I would rather go there. Pray, don't ask me to remain here, Francis."

"My dearest one, do I ever ask you to do anything you don't like?" I answered. And the matter was virtually settled.

I thought that possibly she was alarmed at the idea of being left here alone. It was not like her at all, for in all the course of our intimacy I had never been able to detect the slightest trace of fear; in fact, all her faults were on the side of extreme rashness and recklessness. Still, this house, though pleasant for two, would be extremely solitary and melancholy for one. It stood quite alone, off the road and away from the town, with the grove of sighing cypresses behind it and the shady garden shutting it in in front; and at night even the native servant left, and, if ordered to stay, would probably slip off just the same. So that it was quite understandable that in the hours of the night the sense of isolation might oppress a sensitive, excitable nature like hers beyond bearing.

However, it was so unlike her to suggest for me what she would dislike for herself that, long after Naranyah's head lay in serene unconsciousness on my arm that night, I lay awake wondering and cursing Brown's impertunity.

Then it did not seem unnatural that Naranyah should consider in her heart the fearful heat and hard work of Constantinople worse than the lonely ease and comfort here, and therefore should have chosen it for herself.

Still, as I did not know, I did not see what I could do except let her go, and, if Harley did not return as he was expected to in a fortnight, follow her and tell Brown it was his own fault, that I had warned him I was not going to leave Naranyah alone in Constantinople.

The following day Naranyah returned to Constantinople, and I was left alone.

There is nothing, perhaps, so melancholy as to remain behind in a place once shared by a loved companion. I felt my enforced solitude weigh heavily on my spirits. I had my work, of course, through the day, but towards night, when I strolled through the thick shade of the garden, then it was that all sorts of doubts and anxious thoughts sprang upon me.

There were heaps of things I might have done, heaps of so-called amusements; there were other Europeans in the place, and naturally card-tables, drinking-rooms, smoking-lounges, cafés, clubs, and so on. But in me there was an unconquerable distaste for every sort of amusement, except some violent, mental

stimulus or some really intellectual society—possibly the two most difficult things in this life to obtain.

Cards bored me, gossip bored me, drinking bored me, the cafés bored me.

I did not mind going through the round when Naranyah was with me, and the inanities of the evening made something for us to laugh and jest over coming home, and I had her amusing remarks and clever criticisms at my elbow through it all. But to seek it alone! It was not worth while crossing my own threshold to obtain.

No, the company of my own mind was better than that.

I used to walk slowly up and down the path at the back and side of the house, between its walls and the cypress grove which raised its innumerable spires against the moonlit or the starlit blue.

All along the path stood the erect and slender cypress trees like a dart from the ground, reminding me of Naranyah's figure and leaning forward between them its soft, rosy crest, stood the lovely *Cryptomeria Elegans*, a native of Japan; and from the path were visible, here and there, the domes and towers and minarets of the town, recalling to me the past glory of Hadrian and Constantine.

The one great question that seized me always for its prey was: Had Naranyah been glad to go back to Constantinople? Had it been a relief to separate from me? Had the flattered attraction of a man's admiration and passion worn off, and would she be glad to escape now, only she hesitated and shrank, as she would always shrink, from inflicting suffering on another?

The idea possessed me, and by the end of a fortnight I had almost persuaded myself that it was so, and a great gloom fell upon me. A sullen, savage, furious, rebellious gloom.

On the last night of the fortnight the saddest point of thought was reached. It was past midnight. I was sitting, thinking as usual, under the lamplight, with the window by my bed standing open into the hot night. The day's work was done, and I was sick of Turkish law. I had been reading my old Ovid, the only book of my own I had there, not the *Ars Amatoria*—what more could Ovid teach me now of love than I knew myself?—but the sad complaints of his exile that seemed to answer to my own. Beside the book stood a serai of water and a tumbler of untasted wine. I was lost in a reverie.

From the sill, filling the frame in front of me, against the dark sky, rose a shadowy,

shifting form, fading into the thin air, a voice seemed to be saying somewhere in the air, "Francis, Francis!"

A stinging, biting moisture forced itself between my lids.

How, how can I relinquish you? I thought to that floating, formless apparition.

The night was perfectly still, not a breath, not a sound within nor without. Then suddenly there seemed a scratching, scrambling sound outside, beneath the verandah, the twinge of the slight railings as they shook beneath a sudden weight; there was a bound from window to floor and Naranyah in the flesh stood before me, drenched in sweat and covered with dust from head to foot, but beautiful to look upon as always. The thin, patent leather evening shoes she was wearing were cut to pieces on her feet, and one of them was filled with blood; the face was desperately pallid, and the usually serene brows contracted from suffering and exhaustion.

I started to my feet, my heart standing still between dismay and delight.

"You will faint," I said; "drink this."

Naranyah pushed away the wine and drew out a little revolver from her breast and laid it on the table.

"I want nothing, Francis, except your kiss

and embrace, and to be with you. I have walked thirty-six miles for it," she said, in a tone unnatural from excitement. And with a burst of tears from pain and weakness, she threw herself into my arms. Her whole body was quivering in every strained nerve and muscle. I felt her heart beat in wild, irregular throbs against mine. Every trembling pulse seemed to leap as if it would burst through the skin. A flood of her electricity gushed through every pore of the nervous, sensitive, excited frame into mine and roused my own, until there seemed a scorching interchange between us.

Naranyah was in one of those states of excited frenzy that I had seen her in before, and into which she could be sometimes thrown from her reserved dignity of every day, and that were filled with a terrible, seductive delight for me.

There are some feelings, some moments in this life that defy the power of words, almost the power of thought and recollection afterwards.

There seemed so little here between soul and soul, so little between us both and immortality; the panting, half-fainting form on my breast seemed but the most transparent shell for the divine, impassioned, maddened mind that had urged it back to its companion.

Surely it was a spirit that I clasped, the spirit of one of the Immortals.

"It is distracting to be away from you, Francis. I get to long so much for you I could not stand it any longer."

And she raised her face, that not the dust of the road nor the tears nor the sweat could divest of its charm for me, and convulsed and overpowered with my own feelings, I bent over her and kissed her as she desired, oppressed by the reverence that always filled and guided my love, and distracted by the sight of her weakness and tears and blood.

And to know that she had encountered this amount of suffering and fatigue for the mere pleasure of my presence was an incense and a flattery that threatened to overpower my reason.

It would have been surely to any man, coming from an object loved as I loved her?

It revealed so clearly how mutual our passion was, that hers was hardly second in intensity to my own.

And I had just been thinking she was tired, and anxious to escape!

The revulsion of feeling was complete, sudden and violent, and I strained desperately and fiercely to me the delicate, trembling form that clung to me as if asking, seeking, demand-

ing my embrace, as if it found in me the consolation and the cure for its fatigue and strain and pain.

I felt her weight press heavier upon me, and I was afraid she was fainting. I raised her head; the light of consciousness was still in her face. I made her drink the wine.

"Do, my dearest; only to please me," I said. And she drank it.

She sank upon the side of the bed, naturally half-dead with fatigue. The hysterical sobs had ceased, but the muscular trembling was uncontrollable.

"How could you risk it?" I said gently. "Thirty-six miles in this heat! You might have killed yourself!"

"Not before I reached here," she answered—as if what happened after that were of no account.

"There was no other way to get to you. The line was broken down. They told me that. I knew I should have to walk the last thirty-six miles, but I felt I must come. You have not forgotten your Plato, surely?' the longing *ἰδέσθαι, ἀπτεσθαι, φιλεῖν*, 'for the sight and the kiss and the touch'—It became intolerable."

Her head was lying on my shoulder, and I brushed the thick white coating of dust

from the silky blackness of her hair, and dried the face and eyes with my handkerchief.

"It's a beastly road, too," I said; "wretchedly lonely and dangerous."

"There is not much danger with that as a *hospes comesque corporis*," said Naranyah, carelessly glancing at the revolver on the table.

"I should have shot down anyone who had interfered with me."

My eyes followed hers. I recognised the revolver; it was one I had given her in town, with her name and mine engraved upon it.

"Did you start from the office in the afternoon, or when?" I asked.

"Oh, there is no office now: we are all anyhow, at random," Naranyah answered, drawing off her cloak. Beneath it she was only wearing a thin white muslin bodice, through which glowed the soft and lovely breast, the powerfully poised shoulders and supple arms. "The place is very hot, and heaps of people have left."

"When did you start to walk?" I said, thinking with horror of those miles and miles of rugged, uneven road lying towards Constantinople, and feeling her waist heave and

swell and contract violently after the long strain.

"I have been walking seven hours and a half exactly," said Naranyah, drawing out her watch and looking at it. "I could have done it quicker, only I got lamed half way; I trod on a piece of glass and it went into the arch of the foot. It's been a horrid nuisance to me all the last part of the way."

And she kicked off her shoes, which were literally in shreds, and the white silk stocking, soaked with blood, on to the floor. The most unsuitable gear for a long walk possible.

Any other individual but herself would have waited to change her shoes, surely, knowing she had to walk thirty-six miles on such a road!

"I must do something for your foot," I said.

"Leave the foot. Do let it alone; the dust has made a plaster for that long ago. We have only a few hours together, I must go back to-morrow; they are too precious to spend a minute of them over that. I shall not feel it to-night. Francis, my mind has been slowly petrifying at Constantinople; I have come back to warm it at the old fires. If I could say how I have longed to see the

straight lines of your face, and the look in your eyes that never smile on any one but me." And she clasped her two burning hands round my throat and kissed it.

Then indeed the culminating point of my passion was reached, perhaps of my life. The tide of feelings that she had roused beyond all stemming swept over me and engulfed me.

Clearer than ever before, at least in a way more strikingly appealing, she had shown me her own love, proved it.

It must have been an overwhelming longing that had impelled her to walk in that pain and that intense heat, mile after mile for seven hours.

My mind entered into that supreme delirium which is the only joy of this life.

That she was with me, that my eyes beheld her, that my arms clasped her, this was but the least of what I cared for. I was an ascetic, not by nature, perhaps, but by habit. The fleeting, transient, sensory pleasure was the faintest, feeblest component of that joy she gave.

The greatest was the knowledge that the divine, the unfettered, the unchainable, the unconquerable spirit was mine, that I was the possessor and master and owner of that which man cannot rule by force, which no

earthly power can constrain, that is for ever free, that can mock and elude the torturer or the lover though the body lie helpless in their grasp. She could not rest without me ; fourteen days were too long a separation.

Her impulsive, peculiarly independent mind that submitted to no restraint and no coercion, that was undisciplined even by the ordinary moral conscience of men, and that mocked and derided all laws, had yet given itself wholly and unreservedly to me, and loved and delighted in the presence of its conqueror.

She was mine now and for eternity even beyond the tomb ; I had won the vital, the deathless principle ; I held in my hand, under my control, a spark of the sacred fire, the Will and the Soul of man.

The last thing that I can remember that she said to me that night was :

"I am content, Francis ; let us sleep on into Eternity."

The next morning Naranyah was perfectly calm, all her serene, unruffled composure came back to her ; every glance and word and tone had the accustomed dignity and tranquillity.

It seemed marvellous to me who had seen her beside herself in that wild, uncontrolled frenzy of physical pain and mental passion last night.

She was sweet and gentle, as always to me, but full of a soft and quiet resolution to return that day.

"I positively must, and I am quite willing to now," she said. "I have seen you, and that is all I wanted."

She bound up her foot, which, as I had been afraid, had been bleeding all night, with the medical and surgical skill she was a mistress of.

Before I allowed her to go, I made her answer my questions.

"Now," I said, detaining her; "do answer me. Are you overworked there?"

"No, really; there is very little to do," she answered, looking up and making no effort to free herself.

"Shall I come back with you?" I asked. "I will directly; leave this place to do what it likes, rather than that you should suffer in any way."

Naranyah flung two warm, impulsive arms round my neck:

"No, Francis. Stay here for another ten days or so, and then when Harley has come back, we will have our holiday. I would rather you stayed till then, much."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CITY OF DEATH.

JUST a week had passed since Naranyah had walked over to see me, and given me' that convincing answer to my doubting, questioning thoughts, and I was expecting every day to hear of Harley's return and to be free to rejoin her, when I received the news that Sir Henry Graves was coming to Adrianople, and that I was to receive and put him up for the night..

I coloured faintly as I read the name. Graves was British Ambassador at Constantinople, and a former friend of my father. I must receive him, *ex officio* of course, otherwise . . . . . He arrived about six in the evening. I knew him by sight, as I had met him several times in Constantinople, but I had avoided a personal interview with him.

Now, however, he shook hands with me,

He had a pleasant, cordial manner, and through dinner we chatted like a couple of old friends.

I was in a frame of mind to be civil to anybody, and would have entertained old Nick himself with a good grace.

Deep down in my heart nestled the glowing, smiling image of my darling, thrown up in the fresh, vivid light of her love for me, and on the surface lay a serene content, an imperturbable calm; an amiable indifference, in fact, to everything.

Graves made no reference to my father, nor any personal matter, and the dinner passed over very well. Then, just as we had finished and I was leaning back, idly playing with my napkin ring and waiting till he had finished his wine, he looked at me with a twinkle in his eyes, and said:

"I was much amused at your funking the plague and sending a substitute. I did not expect it, but I think you were quite right, if you had one."

If he had thrown a bomb on the table, I could hardly have stared at him more amazedly than I did in answer to this.

"I? Plague? *Where?*" I asked, all at sea.

"Why, at Constantinople; it's the most deadly plague we ever had. But it's im-

possible you can't know about it. I sent the message to you myself three weeks ago."

I stared at him, motionless, transfixed; every drop of blood in my body seemed to fly to the heart and besiege it.

"Good God!" I ejaculated, as the whole truth rushed in upon me like a flood of daylight.

The message to me three weeks ago, that Naranyah had opened and read; her gravity, her apparently senseless, childish burning of the paper, so that it could not by any possibility meet my eyes, her look of anxious terror when I suggested my own return, were all explained now. Her questioning—"What's to be done? One of us must go." And she had returned into the jaws of death in my place; she had gone to my post and my duties in the middle of the plague. Quietly and calmly, in the few seconds that intervened between the reading and the burning of the paper, she had formed her own resolution, to risk and probably give up her life in the place of mine, and quietly she had carried it out. She whom I had thought, first, afraid to stay here alone, and next, tempted back by the freedom of Constantinople!

Accursed fool and idiotic brute that I had

been, as always! Cursed, senseless animal and dolt, incapable of realising the splendid qualities, the calm, determined, male resolution, the virile intrepidity that underlay the soft and lovely exterior of the Asiatic.

"The most deadly plague we ever had." And she, Naranyah, was there in the centre of the filth and sickness, sent there by her unselfish, devoted love for me.

As there are some moments of joy, so are there some moments of accumulated horror, too deep for expression.

Graves was aghast at the effect of his words.

"Come, Heath, what is it?" he said, shaking my arm. "You are not a married man, are you? You haven't a wife or child at Constantinople, have you?"

He spoke half in jest, to recall me.

"Wife! Child!" I echoed, in contemptuous scorn, shaking off his hand. "No, some one dearer than both."

"A friend?" hazarded Graves.

I nodded.

"Is it that singularly handsome girl I used to meet you driving or walking with in Constantinople?" pursued Graves curiously.

"Yes," I said mechanically, thinking. "My God!"

"But I wish you'd explain all this. What do you mean? I am quite at a loss. Did you not receive the message? Am I to understand that?" said Graves, confused and taken aback.

"Look here," I said, controlling myself. "I brought this girl here, with me, to this place, do you see?" Graves nodded. "As you say, three weeks ago a message did come for me; I was busy and told her to open it; she read it and then burnt it, and I never saw it at all. See? Well, then, without hinting a word about the plague, she said that Brown wanted one of us to return as our substitute had gone."

Graves leant back and laughed aloud.

"Gone! Yes, and very effectually, too. I told you he was dead. Well?"

"Then she acted, and professed to be anxious to return, without arousing my suspicions of *that* in the faintest degree, and I let her go. And she went—to save me."

I could hardly articulate, I felt choked with horror and apprehension.

"Ha!" said Graves, staring at me. "It was an uncommonly unselfish thing to do. I sent for you because I knew, or at least I believed I knew, you would come, plague or no plague, and we had hardly a European

in the place—nor a native either, for that matter; it has cleared them all off, those who have not left are dead or dying. It's a terrible business."

This to me, with Naranyah there!

"It was when I left, that's about three weeks ago; Brown mentioned he had got, I understood him to say, a substitute; otherwise of course I should have assumed you had gone there."

"I must get over there at once," I muttered, more to myself than him.

"To take her out of danger?" said Graves good-naturedly, leaning back in his chair.

I was looking at him absently, revolving what would be best to do, and the anxiety and horror I was feeling were, I suppose, imprinted in my eyes, for Graves said soothingly:

"Still, it does not follow that she should get it, you know. There are dozens of other people there too; it does not attack everybody."

"No," I answered desperately. "But you don't know her; she has no consideration for herself, no caution. She will wear herself to shreds, try herself to the last limit of human endurance to serve others in an epidemic like this, and then . . ." I left the sentence unfinished, the voice died away in my throat at the words.

Graves' face grew still more sympathetic.

"Yes," he muttered reflectively, "I have heard something of her pluck. Strange, these are not qualities one expects coupled with such beauty." And then after a minute he said, looking at me closely :

"And is this girl so very much to you, Heath?"

"Much to me?" I repeated. "She is everything. All that I have in this world and the next."

There was a long silence, while I looked down on the table, thinking. At last I said half to myself :

"Naranyah walked it, so can I."

"Who walked where?"

"This girl walked over from Constantinople, a week ago, at least, the last thirty-six miles."

"What a mad thing to do!" exclaimed Graves. "Upon my soul, I wonder she ever got here alive. What was that for?"

"To see me," I answered. And Graves opened his eyes very wide indeed. This was all very strange talk, I suppose to his British ears.

"Merely to see you?" he echoed, as if he thought either he or I were mad.

"Yes," I answered, trying to keep the thread of my own thoughts straight between his questions.

"When did she arrive?" was the next.

"About twelve or so, p.m."

"And spent the night with you?"

"Yes."

"And went back next day?"

"Yes," and I buried my face in my hands with a groan. What she had gone back to!

I did not care what Graves knew or thought. I was too wrapt up in my own plans to heed his presence even. There was silence, and it startled me when Graves spoke again. I had almost forgotten him.

He spoke in an altered tone, not unkindly, but very seriously and gravely, and in a low voice.

"So this is the passion, then, that has ruined your career and wasted your talents, cut you off from your father and landed you practically an exile in Turkey at one-and-twenty. Heath, was it not a terrible pity to give way to it at the first?"

Generally I resent the least interference in or reference to my affairs, but Graves was a man more than twice my age, and had spoken rather with interest than reprehension. Besides, now was not the time for resentment, still less for the discussion of ethical distinctions.

All through my life men have been friendly to me and done what they could for me, and often assisted me where they most condemned.

I raised my head now and met his eyes fully. I answered nothing to his homily, but said merely :

" Help, me, Graves, help me."

I saw a softer look come over his face, and he said :

" I am afraid I can't help you much ; anything I can do I will."

" How can I get get her away from Constantinople into safety ? " I said.

Graves thought, then he said :

" It's no use your bringing her here, the plague is spreading fast in this direction, and really, I think, dying out of the capital.

" I am going to my house at Therapia tomorrow. I believe it's perfectly safe there. If you can induce her to leave her work, I invite her for a fortnight or so to me down there. She won't be wanted so much at Constantinople now, as Brown is coming back."

" Thank you," I said earnestly. " You will put me under a great obligation."

" She won't come alone, that is very clear from all she has done hitherto, so the only way will be for you to come and bring

her with you," said Graves kindly. "To-morrow evening or the next day, if you like."

"You are extremely kind," I said, flushing with gratitude and relief. "I wish I could go back to Constantinople at once," I added, looking at my watch and pushing back my chair.

"Now, my dear fellow, do be sensible," Graves said quietly. "You had much better not attempt going over till to-morrow morning. A train leaves at six. If you really want to be of use to your friend when you get there, take my advice, don't think of going before the morning. I leave for Therapia later, that need not affect you; go by the first train."

I thought perhaps he was right, and submitted to the advice. And we talked on a little.

Under a calm exterior and a quiet voice, a wild, fervent prayer to some unknown Providence rose from my sinking heart.

That night, as we parted, Graves held out his hand.

"I shan't see you in the morning before you start, I think," he said. "Come now, you mustn't be so frightfully down about it. That never does any good. I hope you will

find your friend well, and I shall look forward to seeing you both at Therapia ; and if she is a little overworked, we must bring her round between us."

I pressed his hand warmly and gratefully, and thanked him.

The following day I trod again the streets of Constantinople.

It was indeed returning to a city of death. An unutterable and awful stillness hung over it, the silent, scorching sky glared down upon the silent, scorching pavements ; and I walked along them and my footsteps were the only sound. I met no one. One pariah dog slunk by me in the deserted road, that was all.

The houses on each side had their windows shut and the blinds of nearly all were down, or half down, dusty and awry. The shops beneath were empty, here and there the windows broken. The rest had their doors nailed and their shutters up. The silence of death reigned supreme. A faint, sickening scent hung in the heavy, putrid air ; the heat was stifling—and Naranyah had been working here three weeks ! I went up the hill to Brown's house ; I should find her, I thought, or at least learn something of her there. As I passed up the sad, dust-laden garden,

Naranyah herself opened the door to come out, and I paused.

I thought she looked pale, thin and delicate in the glaring light, and I felt sick with fear.

As she caught sight of me, the ready smile flashed over her face. First a delighted surprise filled it, and then anxiety.

"Francis! Why have you come over here?" she said coming down to meet me.

The sunlight caught the extreme points of her eyelashes and fell across the eyes, giving a superhuman and unnatural light to the face. I almost expected to see her fade and vanish away from me, into the sunshine. I kissed her in silence. A tenderness and veneration beyond all expression filled me as I did so.

"I have come to beg you to leave here to-night—this evening. Say that you will," I said in fevered, desperate anxiety.

Naranyah laughed. "Of course I will do anything you wish. I always do. Come into the house; the sun is so hot here."

She turned back into the doorway, and I followed. We went into the dining-room; the house seemed quite empty and quite still.

"I suppose you have seen Graves, or whom?" she asked me.

"Yes, I have seen Graves and heard about the message," I said very gently.

"I know you came back here with the idea of preserving my life; but you must know my life is worthless without you. Don't let there be any misconception, Naranyah, between us. Your death would mean this passing down my throat. Do you see?" and I showed her the fluid in an ounce bottle, and then replaced it.

It is never good form to threaten; but surely sometimes it is best and fairest to state plainly an immutable intention.

Naranyah paled a little, and she bit her lip. She knew, I think, that an Englishman does not make a deliberate statement without meaning it.

"You take everything too seriously; I only came because I think Asiatics are less liable to plague than Europeans. I have been through two epidemics in India; I don't think anything of them," she said, trying, as always, to depreciate her own conduct.

"No; but then you don't think anything of anything," I answered; and she laughed. "Well, Graves has asked us to go to him at Therapia, you especially," I said, "and we are going to-day, aren't we?" I added persuasively.

"I don't know, I am sure, when Brown

is coming back ; he thought to-morrow or the next day," Naranyah answered hesitatingly.

"What's Brown? Hang Brown! let him come or not, as he likes," I said. "Why should he leave his post at all? You have stayed here through all the danger; now when it is declining, you are justified in coming away—because I wish it."

The last words were added, not with the authority of a lover, but the anxiety of a suppliant.

Naranyah looked at me with a half-jesting amusement, smiled, and raised her hand from the table with a gesture to show the matter was settled.

There was a minute's silence, and then she said :

"I have a patient I must go and see, Francis; I was just starting when you came," and she got up.

I started up too, full of fresh apprehension.

"What sort of patient? Where?" I asked.

"There's a poor woman in the low quarter, a European," she answered. "Her husband and two children are lying dead of plague now, and she has been struck down with it too, poor thing. She is expecting her confinement every hour. Now," and Naranyah leant one hand on the table and looked

dreamily down on the floor, "the child may not be infected yet, and I think I can save it, if not the mother."

She was looking down, lost in her own idea for the moment, so that she could not see the horror and consternation in my face.

For me, who was a misogynist, to listen to such a speech and think that Naranyah, the core of my heart, was going to risk herself in such a service!

"Good heavens, Naranyah!" I exclaimed, "I can't let you go; it's impossible. What! You to go into this den of contagion, to remain hours, perhaps, breathing that polluted atmosphere, waiting through a delayed or protracted labour; you to bend over this loathsome creature, catch her tainted breath, and stain your hands in all that filth and corruption! By God! it's too much."

The practical danger was, of course, what moved me to speak, but also there was repulsiveness in the idea of Naranyah going to fulfil such an office.

But she never seemed repelled by the most revolting manifestations of human, or in fact, any life. All that seemed excited in her was an intense pity, commiseration, sympathy, and desire to soothe or alleviate, that obliterated every other emotion.

Naranyah was startled in her turn; she put one of her hands, clean now as the spotless cuff round the smooth wrist, on my breast as I stood in front of her.

"But, my dear Francis," she said, "it's what I've been doing more or less for the last three weeks, besides the consular work."

"I know, my sweet," I said with a shudder, "and some beneficent deity has protected you; but don't let us tempt the gods too far."

"She will certainly die if I don't go," murmured Naranyah, irresolute between her natural kindness of heart and her desire to please me.

"Let her die, and a dozen others like her, rather than you should go to save them," I said. "What are a million of these flies' existences worth beside a precious life like yours? This is the first time I have opposed my will to yours. Think, Naranyah! Don't go."

And I seized the dear little soft hand that held the reins of all my life and being, and pressed it.

Perhaps the contact influenced her; she smiled and said impulsively:

"Very well, then; let her die. After all, I did not come back to save them, but you."

## CHAPTER XI.

### NUNC DIMITTIS.

By sunset all our arrangements were completed and we went out into the slightly cooling air, but it seemed thick and heavy with evil odours.

It was Naranyah's wish that we should stroll out, and therefore it was done; it was quiet and still, the quarter seemed deserted, the city hushed in a terrible repose; it was the last days of the plague.

No one, I think, who has not been in a pestilence-struck city, with a dear one by their side, can realise the deadly weight of apprehension that lies upon the heart as one sees all round the traces of death and desolation, and feels with each indrawn breath the precious lungs may have absorbed the floating poison, that each beloved footfall may be one towards the grave.

I felt desperately anxious for her, but I

bore my anxiety in silence ; it must have been her fearless indifference to the danger that had shielded her so long.

As we walked, I fancied her hand pressed a little on my arm.

"Are you tired?" I asked her.

"No," she answered, with her ready lie that I never knew whether I admired or hated, and then added, smiling: "Well, possibly just a little; there is nothing in that. You see, I have had a good deal to do these last three weeks; I shall be very glad of a rest now."

"A few more hours, and you will be breathing the cool breeze off the Euxine, at Therapia. The very thought is refreshing," I said.

Naranyah nodded, and we loitered on a few steps in silence.

"Why! Do you hear that?" she said after a minute, as the sound of music reached us.

"That is from the Church; I suppose they are celebrating an evening service. It is the first they have had for some time. Let us go in and see what sort of an attendance there is, and we can sit down for a minute."

We were close by the church, and we

turned into it through the open portal. It was nearly dark inside; some lighted tapers shone like stars in the distant chancel. We turned a step or two to the left, and took two seats in an empty pew. A pillar ran up beside it, and there was a long, arched window high above our heads at the end. The service was drawing to its close. A profound silence filled the place; the few worshippers there were wrapt in prayer. And I turned to her, who was my only religion and thought. A faint light came through the dim pane and fell softly on the erect, dark head beside me. A half-jesting reproof came into her eyes as they fell upon me, and she murmured as the lesson was being read:

"This is your Christian faith, you should attend."

I met those eyes and I forgot the plague, as the joyful "Cantate Domino" came floating down the aisle, I forgot the insecurity of human life, however dear. I thought I should soon have her away in the cool, quiet peace of Therapia to serve and worship at my leisure, and my whole heart rose in a glad fervour borne away in thankfulness on the strains of the anthem. As the flood of sound rose upward and swelled to the shadow in the roof,

my soul raised on the wings of its own emotion, joined joyfully in the "O sing unto the Lord a new song," but the rapture of adoration was really for the beauty by my side.

"After all," I thought, "what does it matter? Is she not herself a portion and a manifestation of the Divinity?"

I put my arm round her slender waist and murmured into her ear:

"You are my only faith."

"Oh, hush!" returned Naranyah, "this is sacrilege, take away your arm."

"Sacrilege! Why? My religion, if not the same as the Christian, has the same tenets," I whispered, half laughing, and disobeying her command. However, since she seemed to wish it, I became grave and quiet and the last solemn words of the glad hymn came to us:

"With righteousness shall He judge the world and the people with equity."

Somehow or other we looked at each other again then, a sort of involuntary glad consciousness in our eyes. I did not stir through the lesson that followed, and turned my eyes away to the darkness in the roof above the pale light of the candles, and then, in a serene hush, breathed forth the *Nunc Dimittis*.

As the first peace-diffusing notes fell upon us, at the "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," I saw Naranyah bow her head and a great terror froze upon me, there seemed in the gesture an inexpressible resignation, a consent, assent and acceptance of the words; the next moment her figure swayed and she fell back upon my shoulder unconscious.

I started up, my arm that was still round her waist supported her. I stooped over her and lifted her completely and carried her down the short piece of aisle to the door. I paused one moment on the shallow steps of the church and looked up and down the street; it was empty. It was not far to the Consul's house, I could carry her. I walked on, my heart almost bursting with agony to feel how thin and light she had grown in this last week she had been away from me. I felt stunned with my misery.

Fate had struck her now within an hour or two of safety, after three long weeks of toil in all the horrors of the plague, and there had been none to relieve her, none to save her; and I, who should have been her protector, had been living on in a cursed and fearful blindness, and now when I had come, I was too late!

Just as I had gained the house door she recovered consciousness, and her eyes unclosed as I carried her through and laid her on the bed.

Precious and beloved burden, might it only be given to me to bear to my life's end!

"This is the epidemic, Francis; but now you won't worry, will you? One in every five gets through, I may be that one." And she looked up with her inevitable laugh that mocked at the ills of this world when they touched herself.

I was silent. The horror and agony on my white face answered her.

"Send for Osman Haië," she said. "Tell him to treat me as I have been doing my patients all this time: he has seen me bring round dozens of them." She laid her head back on the pillow and closed her eyes. I left her one instant to call up the servant and send him off for the Turkish doctor. As I returned she was convulsed in an attack of vomiting that shook the whole bedstead. I gave her a flat tin basin such as is common over there, and supported her. She tried to wave me away with her hand, but fruitlessly. After a second, she fell back, and I was horror-struck at the look of collapse already on her face.

"Keep away from me," she murmured.

"Nonsense, my darling," I answered; "it is quite useless to ask it." And I took a seat by the bed.

The rest was only for a second, a faintness or sinking sensation seemed to come over her, for both her hands suddenly grasped the bed as if to stay herself, and then followed again violent sickness; a look of intense pain settled on her face, but she said quite calmly to me:

"You will find some opium pills in my case, Francis, packed up ready for going. Get them, they are the best thing for this."

I rose and unpacked the case and got out the pills, she took one, pressed my hand as she did so, and smiled with difficulty. After swallowing the pill, her eyes closed again and twenty minutes perhaps passed in quiet, and I sat and looked at her, crushed and hardly daring to breathe.

Suddenly I heard steps outside and I went to the door. The little fat Turkish doctor was standing there, with his case in his hand. I told him what Naranyah had said and then added—"For God's sake do all, everything you can." Had I possessed anything to offer, I would have made promises; as it was, there was only the intensity of agonised feeling to weight the words. He stared solemnly and

nodded, and we went in. Naranyah opened her eyes and raised herself on one elbow in another tearing fit of retching and sickness. I held her, and each straining effort seemed to rend and tear my heart as it tore her physical frame.

The doctor opened his case and measured into a glass ten drops from a bottle into some water, and between the paroxysms of sickness I gave it to her ; it was immediately thrown up, and the Turk handed me another dose with some carbolic acid ; this she swallowed and retained, and we added an opiate and she fell back prostrate.

I wanted a light, for we were almost in the dark. I summoned the servant, he brought in two lamps and lighted them, and the doctor and I stood one on each side of the bed, like sentinels on guard. But One Enemy can no sentinels deter.

We continued the doses and carbolic acid every quarter of an hour, but the painful vomiting persisted and I felt that her strength was ebbing ; I felt the precious vital force must be given away with each attack, and at last I turned from her in an agony to the doctor.

"My God !" I exclaimed, "can't you do anything more ?"

Naranyah looked up at my voice and put her hand on mine, that gentle restraining touch which I knew of old, that had always had the power to subdue and conquer me.

"Don't worry him, Francis," she said good-naturedly, looking from one to the other.

"It's not his fault, it's the disease, I know the old thing by heart," and she found strength and will to laugh.

We had stood there two hours. The Turk wanted to leave, but he promised to return by four in the morning. He left me, out of his case, all that he thought I should possibly want till then and departed. I took up Naranyah's wrist and felt it, it was nearly pulseless; the hand was wet with a cold perspiration, the same cold sweat lay on the throat and chest. What did it mean? A colder sweat still broke out upon me; she seemed to know my thoughts and, as always, wished to comfort me.

"It means nothing; it's a common symptom," she said faintly. "Bring me some more morphia."

I turned away to get it and when I looked at her again she was convulsed with agony; I sprang back to her. The knees were drawn almost to the chest, the hands clenched, the veins in the forehead swelled to bursting, the

eyes driven forward from the straining sockets, the brave, resolute lips folded together in a perfect silence. I thought, and I think still, she had only asked for the morphia that I might turn and be spared the sight of the spasm she felt approaching.

I dared not touch her at the moment for fear of throwing her into a more violent convulsion. I stood, my own heart in a swoon of agony greater than hers.

If I could have spared her one pang by so doing, I would have thrown myself upon the rack or on the stake and blessed it, and I had to look on and know she was suffering this for me.

After a few seconds the muscles relaxed; I lifted the sinking head on to my breast. She forced the trembling lips into their accustomed smiling curves, the corners of the mouth were stained with the blood of her tongue, bitten to avoid a sound.

"Intestinal cramps, that's all," she said, and it seemed to my terror-stricken ears that the voice was lower, hollower. Fancy surely!

"If you have a hypodermic injector there..." and she touched her arm, seemingly unable to finish her sentence in words. Her face was blanched, contracted, blighted with pain.

I had never injected morphine before, but

I had seen her do it once upon herself since we had been in Turkey, and love lent me dexterity. I took her arm, which was damp and cold like that of a corpse, and injected the drug under the skin, which I had always seen clear, warm, soft, transparent and elastic, and now was livid, pallid, and chill. I watched her eagerly afterwards, as the soothing influence of the morphine pervaded the system. Heaven be thanked! The pain seemed to lessen, the brows relaxed, she seemed to breathe in peace. There came an interval of calm.

Would it be possible ever to forget the hours of that night? Will it be possible for the brain ever to lose its hold upon them?

When I sat watching her and knowing that all I had, all I possessed, all I desired in this or another world, if there be one, was lying before me in the uncertain balance. And the wringing pain, the wild reproach of feeling that she, in her youth, was relinquishing her life of uncounted years for me.

Oh, agony beyond all description that makes the brain swim and the eyes blind!

My own resolution was fixed: I should not survive her. Why inflict a hell of misery upon myself such as a survival to her would be?

The circle of that slight human waist, those

few inches, nineteen at most, were to me the zodiac. If she were taken from me, the world held nothing else.

But death is not welcome at twenty years ; life is dear, how dear when fired and thrilled with one absorbing passion, no matter what.

I felt then full of springing life ; it urged and leapt in every vein. I desired to live, and to live for her and with her. Through the last year I had drunk of the real *elixir vita*—Happiness.

The remembrance of our delight of a week, only one week back, poured upon me. She had taught me indeed that life was precious. None, I thought, could rob me of the right of dying with her ; but to live, to live with her, was what I desired.

Resignation ! I have never known what the word meant. A rebellion, a fury swept over me as I looked upon the perfect form, the divine features, marred, spoiled, and violated by the loathsome plague under my very eyes.

There was no sign of reaction nor approaching recovery through the night.

The spasmodic cramps, with, I was convinced, frightful pain, though she gave no sign nor groan, came on again and again ; and as the first gentle light of day stole in

upon us, the dawn that should have broken so sweetly for us at Therapia, I looked at her and thought the end had come. It was a vision of death.

She lay still, the hands and feet cold, livid and collapsed; the body seemed contracted, shrivelled, as a corpse, the lovely features, only yesterday so soft and full with the rich, warm light of youth and health and beauty, were pinched and sharp and blue.

She was fearful, terrible to look upon, and I sank upon my knees and buried my face on my arms outstretched upon the bed, smitten utterly.

In this position a minute later the doctor found us. He tested the temperature, and then beckoning me away from the bed, said :

"The temperature is falling. Is it possible to get some hot water and a couple of blankets? I want to bring back some heat, produce a reaction."

"Everything is possible," I said; "anything. I will bring them."

I tore two blankets off an unmade bed in another room and ordered the servant to bring me a bucket of boiling water as soon as humanly possible, and showed him some money to quicken him. It was unnecessary; Naran-

yah had nursed this very man through the plague into life three days back, and gratitude lent him the best of all energies.

When the water was brought, I wrung out one of the blankets in it. Haië sprinkled it over with turpentine and held it in a cloud of steam, while I lifted Naranyah. She seemed in a state of utter collapse, the body cold and passive.

How different from the gay, springing form, full of its own proud will and spirit, that had formerly met my arms!

In an instant Haië enveloped her in the steaming blanket.

"You haven't a waterproof sheet or anything of that sort, of course?" he said, looking doubtfully at the bed. "We could not lay her back upon that without soaking it."

"I can hold her," I said; "my warmth will only be an advantage, if you can wring out the next blanket, when this is cold."

"You will get very wet," he returned.

"It doesn't matter," I said. "There's the turpentine behind you. Are you going to give it internally?"

"Yes, while she can take it," he answered. And there was silence.

All through the morning we pursued this treatment. I stood holding her in a succes-

sion of the hot, wet blankets, and it seemed we generated a little artificial heat.

The doctor went away for his luncheon, and I laid Naranyah down in dry wraps and sat by her.

It almost seemed as if now there was going to be a turn towards recovery.

My heart trembled and rose and fell, swinging on the thread of uncertain hope.

Haië did not come again till the close of the afternoon; he looked at Naranyah and said to me :

“Rouse her if you like, I am afraid she is sinking,” and he got out a flask of brandy.

I bent over the nearly pulseless form and kissed her, the lips were moist with sweat and saliva; it roused her.

“Pray don’t,” she said, turning her head away. And the voice was no longer Naranyah’s voice.

“You will certainly get it, and I shall not be there to nurse you.” She looked at me with the last words, a tender, longing look that with the words went through and through my tortured soul; the fearful agony I was feeling she must have seen. I could say nothing. I took the brandy from Haië and held it to her lips, she made an effort and swallowed it.

We alternated brandy and champagne every quarter of an hour, but all was hopeless then.

At last Naranyah turned from the glass.

"I cannot any longer, it is torture. *Fiat voluntas Dei*," and she sank her head sideways against my breast as I stood by her.

I turned my eyes on the doctor who was at the foot of the bed.

"Leave us," I said. And he went out.

I knew now she was dying and there was no more hope, and she had probably known it before I had.

I stood holding her to me, silent, motionless. I knew she was going, and there was nothing for me to do now but curse God and die.

Half unconsciously I sought in my breast pocket for the little case. It was gone! She must have taken it from my possession. Well, no matter. Softly I laid her down upon the bed and crept across the dark room towards the window and picked up the razor that lay on the table by it and opened it. "*Sic, sic, juvat ire sub umbras*," I muttered, passing my fingers lightly along its keen edge. Then something without caught the mechanical vision and I looked towards the sky, and there glittered and danced the planet Venus, shooting out its lurid light towards

me, over the cupolas of Stamboul, as it had done on the night of my decision.

“Francis!” The tone once unrivalled and incomparable in its sweetness, came now as from beyond the grave, a hoarse, hollow, croaking sound, the frightful voice of the plague, the voice of death; it struck on my distending ear. I was at the bedside in an instant.

“I am going now, O Francis, my dearest one!”

It was the tone not of fear but of passionate tenderness and longing. I touched her. She was cold. I was speechless, I threw myself beside her on the charpoy my full length, burning with the blazing passions and strength and fire of life. Could not the heat and fury of my love infuse new warmth through the cold, sunken, corpse-like limbs? I passed my left arm under her head and shoulders and kissed the parched, withered, blackened lips that I had known in their first soft, youthful bloom, and pressed the shrunken, yielding breast to my own desperate leaping heart in an unspeakable, unnameable agony.

Through her sinking lids she caught the gleam of the razor in my right hand.

She extended hers and clasped her soft palm over the blade. I dared not stir it.

"Don't throw away your life when I have tried to save it," she murmured hollowly, with her lips close against my neck.

"You are going and I am coming with you," I said savagely through my teeth, "take your hand off the razor." She still clasped the blade, and I could not venture to move it.

"Live on and learn to accept the inevitable, '*ut melius quid-quid erit pati!*'" she said, with an effort of the failing voice.

"I would have stayed with you if I could." And she raised the heavy lids and the calm, fearless eyes looked up to mine, expanding, dilating, glowing with love even through the dried, dulled cornea, even then in the presence of death.

"You know that I love you, and have done always, with my whole soul."

"I know. I know," I said, beside myself, suffocating with sobs, and the hot, blinding tears streaming down on to her neck.

"As none other could . . . and forgive me . . . forgive me for anything I have done . . .

"There is nothing, we have both loved . . . go . . . dangerous for you." But the voice had gone.

"I am only waiting the summons for us both. You say live on, but why? *Vixi!* It has been a delight to live with you, and

it is even greater delight to die with you," I said, the agonised, yet half-triumphant, thoughts flowing without order into words.

"We will seek the shades together, we have realised the promise of Plato: 'They shall lead a glad and joyful existence here, and when they recover their wings, recover them together for their love's sake.'"

Naranyah opened her eyes wide under mine for the last time ; in their depths, beneath their clouding tunic, lay the luminous smile, the old comprehension and realisation, the enraptured assent I knew so well, and I looked into them with an ecstatic triumph in my own ; as our love had been above the law, so it was above death itself. Her hand relaxed upon the razor and fell. I drew the blade up close to my own throat and waited.

A few seconds, our last on earth, passed by as we lay there, the gloom dispelled yet by the light of each other's eyes ; and then came the first struggling wrench of the soul to free itself. I pressed my arm tighter round her and raised her nearer up to my own hot breast, but I could not shield the dried-up, livid body, as it writhed in the loathed embrace of Death. How loathed at nineteen years !

The second tearing spasm came, and each of those limbs I had worshipped for their

beauty shot out straight and became rigid as iron, the breast arched, and the lovely throat I had kissed so often in a trance of pleasure strained back over my arm in helpless agony.

I knew the third struggle would be the last.

As it seized upon the quivering, silent form, I leant forward and drew the razor sharply, savagely, and with all my strength, across my throat.

I felt the flesh gape open with a delirious delight, a flood of hot blood streamed down and over her breast and neck, and I fell forward upon her, with my lips on hers and caught—ah, delicious moment!—her last fluttering, struggling, dying expiration, the final sigh of life resigned that parts exultingly away in the supreme dissolution.

The fleeting anima, and perhaps with it the sweet and beloved soul passed into the soul of her unconscious lover.

## CHAPTER XII.

### HABET.

THE next and only clear thing in my recollection, after a maze of pain, was that I opened my eyes in a familiar room flooded with daylight, and found myself flat on my back, extended on a bed with a sense of constriction in every muscle. What was it that prevented movement? I looked, and then I saw each of my hands enveloped in a handkerchief and strapped tightly down to the bedside, and my feet tied to the rail at the bottom. Round my throat seemed a hard wall to my chin; I could not turn my head. I tried to utter a sound; I could not. Why? I did not know; I lay a helpless log. I knew nothing, except, to my misery and horror, that I still lived, lived, lived. Cursed, execrated fool, who had not been able even to cut his own throat successfully.

Where was she? Where had the freed,

happy spirit strayed while I was prisoned still behind? Surely it would not depart far from its earthly lover. I could follow still.

To wrench myself free to kill, to smash out the obstinate life from my veins that clung to me now as a curse, though once so dear, was an overwhelming impulse, but I could not stir. I cast my eyes round the room, and then between me and the light my eyes fell on a well-known figure. Yes, it was Commissioner Frederick Heath, my father. How had he got here? I looked; he was standing with his back to me gazing at something. What was it? It was, it was the photograph of Naranyah; a thin, frameless card that I had worn night and day at Adrianople, where we had been separated, and brought from there.

He looked in silence, and then there was a savage mutter, and one word went through the room, the vilest word in all the Latin tongue, and to *her*, my sweet. And I knew the cold, iconoclastic gaze was desecrating the face that in its beauty might have melted the arch fiend himself.

And the filthy word stung me to fury. I leant the back of my head hard upon the pillow and raised myself in an arch from the bed in a violent struggle to free myself. I

could not, but the bound feet forced out the bar of the bed, cracking the side posts, and the whole framework shivered as my weight dropped on it again.

My father turned and rushed to me ; he laid his hand on my straining arm.

"Francis, my dear boy, do you know me?" he asked.

I nodded, and my eyes blazed upon him, fit to scorch him out of existence.

Like Hemon in the tomb of Antigone, I would have killed him then if I had had the power.

"Know you?" I thought. "Yes, I know you. Who else would dare insult my darling in the very room of her helpless lover."

He stood and looked at me, and for the first time I saw pity shine all over his face as his eyes rested on me. His son was his son still. All his rage burned against Naranyah. He smoothed the hair off my forehead and murmured :

"Poor unhappy boy, my bright handsome Francis." I twisted my head away as far as I could from his touch. He mistook my movement, and said eagerly :

"Promise me to attempt no violence to yourself, and I will release you this minute."

A violent tearing wrench at both my fettered arms was my only answer. His face grew paler.

"Do you mean you can't promise me to live, now, Francis?"

I nodded, and struggled violently, looking round for some possible aid or assistance.

My father laid his hand on my panting chest, and pressed me down on the bed. I was weak, half-suffocated and bound. I could do nothing.

"You must listen to me," he said. "This is sheer folly. You have been very ill, desperately ill with plague and brain fever. Your throat has been stitched up with the greatest difficulty. Graves has been goodness itself; he it was who first telegraphed to me at Bombay, and I, at infinite trouble and cost to myself, came to find you in this state and nurse you into recovery. We have succeeded, the wound is nearly well and you are clear again; you are convalescent, in fact. To undo all our efforts now would be the most cruel thanklessness and ingratitude."

I listened motionless. So I had had the plague and brain fever and my throat cut, and not any one of these, nor all three combined, had released me!

"It is the merest chance your life was

saved. When the doctor found you he thought you were dead. Had the razor gone one-twentieth of an inch farther you would have been ; it was the narrowest thing possible. He did everything for you ; Graves has done everything also ; Brown has let you use his house all through. I came myself as soon as I could get here ; surely you owe us all something in return."

And I could have cursed them all. What had they done with her ? Where had they taken her ? A tremendous sob broke from me, a flood of tears rushed through my lids. I saw her as I had seen her last, dying in my arms.

"It has been a most frightful passion," my father continued, his face hardening, "and has come to a most frightful end ; between what I hear from Graves and Osman and your own ravings while you were unconscious, I know the whole story, and, by God, what a story it is !" he said bitterly. "I never could have thought a son of mine . . ." and he stopped.

"Would love," I thought, as bitterly. "No, perhaps not."

"Most disastrous the whole thing has been ; but still, you are so young and have so much in your favour that this may pass,

will pass as a boyish folly. It is known even to so few people: it is not too late to retrieve everything. You shall come back with me and we will get you into the Service yet."

I looked at him, and could have laughed in dreary mockery.

Service! Retrieving everything! How he talked! To one whose tearing, fighting mind was only striving to be free, should be free the instant my hand was released, either to sleep for ever on, sharing oblivion with its beloved, or to seek her spirit and unite with it again.

Earth and earthly things existed no more for me.

He had heard the whole story, he said; but he did not seem to know more than the first line.

"If you promise me to' live, Francis, I can promise you all the rest," he went on, and smiled. "Will you give me your word to do nothing foolish?" And he looked at me with his hand on the strap that held my swelled wrist. I shook my head violently, and he paused. "But, my dear boy," he said, "just think, reflect one moment on all life holds for you, all the opportunities, all the possibilities in it. Think of your own youth, your own good looks, your own talents and

powers. Surely you won't throw them all away now, in your reasonable, sane senses, for a worthless . . ." He got no further ; my eyes opened wide and glared at him and paralysed him into silence. He went on in a moment : " This will all be forgotten, even by yourself, in a little while ; like an evil dream, it will wear off. And besides," he added, conscious perhaps that he was producing no effect, " you see now yourself the girl is dead, nothing you do is of any avail, nothing can do any good now, nothing is even known by her, you cannot possibly benefit her by anything now. Any reasonable person would make an effort to dismiss it from their minds."

I closed my eyes in a stupor of pain.

The words in their cold truth were too much : " The girl is dead." The rags and bandages round my throat had got twisted and tight. I was glad ; pray Heaven they might asphyxiate me ; it was my last thought, and then I fainted. Hours passed, and as I would not give any promise they kept me there.

My father and the servant passed in and out and sat by me at intervals.

In the evening the doctor came. The last time my eyes had rested on him, my dying love had been upon my breast. As

my gaze met his again, it seemed as if my whole frame and mind and brain must burst in their agony.

My eyes followed him with a nameless, savage reproach. When he dragged me bleeding off the corpse, he must have known he was doing something worse than murder.

The fury in my face made my father draw him back.

"Take care," he said, "I think his reason is going." But Osman was brave. He bent over me and said :

"I would not let her be put with the rest ; she has a grave alone in the cemetery. When you are well, you can come and see it."

I looked up, grateful for that much, my eyes blind with the starting tears. I think he regretted his crime then.

They were all at one now in the idea of keeping me in life against my will.

My father and the doctor came and poured food and wine and medicines down my throat, and I made no resistance to that. I knew if I refused there were other means they could and would resort to, to force the nourishment upon me that I could not resist. I was helpless amongst them.

Besides, I knew the power was on my side

in reality ; they could not keep me bound perpetually, and the instant they cut my straps . . . .

But they did keep me there longer than I thought. A whole week passed by, and I still lay helpless, outstretched and bound, in physical pain, blessed physical pain that seemed to dull the tortured mind. It was like a slow crucifixion. Every bone and nerve and muscle ached and thrilled with cramping pains.

They would not let me free, nor undo a hand without a promise, and that I would not give.

Loathsome though the bondage was, my word would be a greater one.

They waited upon me and watched me and reasoned vainly with me day after day.

Graves himself came once or twice as my father's friend and spoke to me, and I listened and listened, with closed lids, in silence.

Why they should all have taken so much trouble to retain so reprehensible a person, I hardly know. Possibly, having once begun the struggle, they were determined now from mere irritation to win their way.

Possibly, also, had I been small and puny and ugly, above all, not the first candidate, they might have been more indifferent and let me go in peace.

As it was, I think it struck them as a pity to waste six feet of such good material ; and this same beauty of face and form, that I had blessed when it had brought me Naranyah's kisses, and won first her fancy and then her love, I devoted to hell now it kept me from her.

On the seventh night, towards midnight, I lay alone, with the tears welling up painfully under the thickened lids, when my father came in with a lamp, and I looked at him.

How ill and old and worn he looked, it came home to me suddenly. A fatal impulse of sympathy towards him came over me, an execrable relenting for which I suffer now day by day.

The light fell full on his straight, regular features ; on the intellectual brow, now deeply lined ; on the pale skin, now blanched with anxiety ; on the dark-blue martial eyes, now strained, red and tired as my own ; on the black hair, already brightly tinged with silver.

It was a handsome, splendid face, and stamped with the seal of misery I had put there, and the cursed pity for him grew.

I closed my eyes as he approached, and he thought I was asleep.

He came up to the rail and looked at me

for a long time, and then I heard him mutter to himself :

· "God in Heaven ! My only son !"

He sat down by me in an attitude of despair, so complete, so abject, that it reached me even through my own crushing, blighting misery.

My voice was audible now, though weak and feeble, and I addressed him.

He raised his head, a ray of hope breaking over his face. Perhaps the tone, perhaps an instinct told him I was in a softened mood towards him. He sprang up and put his arm under my head, and raised me a little.

"Francis, my dear, dear boy," he said, with his cold voice quivering and broken with emotion, "live, live for me ; don't inflict this last cruel blow upon me. Death may come upon any of us at any time ; surely then it will be soon enough to accept it. All this has been terrible to me ; spare me any more suffering. Promise me not to attempt your life again ; you will kill me with yourself."

And I, oh ! mad, irrevocable words that since I would have given worlds to retract, I murmured faintly :

"For your sake then I promise."

He unstrapped my hands ; he knew he was safe with my word.

With difficulty I bent the stiffened arms and sat up. I was faint and giddy and dizzy, and everything whirled and swam before my eyes.

I heard my father say he would bring me something, I don't know what, and he left me sitting up; the feet were still tied. I leant forward, and with my swelled fingers and dim vision, painfully untied them, and got up and stood once more.

Supporting myself by the furniture I got across the room to the table by the window. There still lay, amongst some other papers and a pocket-book of mine, the photograph. I took it up with the same reverent touch that had ever been laid on her, and looked at it; the sweet, familiar features, the super-human light, the old smile on the proud, youthful lips met my gaze once more; it was too much for endurance. With a cry, in which met the extremes of human agony and passion, I fell upon the floor, unconscious.

Years have passed since then, and I am in India and in the Civil Service, and one of its valued members.

With the heads, I am that "inestimable servant, Heath;" with women I am that "handsome Mr Heath;" with the men, I

am that "lucky fellow, Heath ;" but not officer nor man nor woman can say they have ever seen me smile.

My life outwardly is devoted to the Government ; inwardly, consecrated to Naranyah's memory, to the memory of one who gave up all to me, and finally her life.

In the cemetery of Constantinople stands a mausoleum of marble, as beautiful as Greek and Turkish art can erect, and on it the inscription :—

" Sacred to the memory of Naranyah Chandmad and Francis Heath, who departed this life together," and the date follows.

It is the truth. Though I exist on as a machine, life is a thing of the past.

My father is disappointed ; he thought that, as in most cases, life and time were all that was needed to heap oblivion on the loved one and consolation on the lover ; but in just one case here and there the wound is too deep or the mind too obstinate for even time to cure ; and my case is the one.

We never allude to the past, but he looks in vain for the light to return to my eyes, or interest to my voice.

The passions and afflictions of our youth generally pass over and are forgotten, and it is well that it is so. But sometimes a wound

made in youth leaves an indelible mark on the soft, impressionable mind which it would not do, perhaps, on the toughened, maturer reason.

On my heart is written an undying record in purple and scarlet.

In most cases it is best and wisest to bury, as far as possible, recollection with the dead; to resolutely dismiss all thought of the Irrevocable, to banish the mementoes and the tokens that recall the loved one, and to pass on to new things.

Yes. I agree.

But for me it is not possible; mind and heart and soul were too wholly and solely given over to the one and only passion of my life once, to recall them now.

My room, when we are together, my father, from mutual inclination, never enters. Should he seek me he comes to the threshold and no farther; he cannot bear to look, and I cannot bear that he should look, upon that countenance. A full-length portrait of Naranyah hangs upon the wall beside my bed. While she lived I had innumerable photographs taken of her, and from one of these the portrait is enlarged, and she stands there as in life before me and smiles down upon me in the long weary nights when the burden of life

seems too great to be borne, and I look upon the razor and revolver with the eye of desire. Beside the bed-head stands, on a table, a marble bust of her, and from my writing-table and my mantelshelf the same sweet image meets my gaze; and more than all, her spirit seems to fill the room, to descend and to hover round me in the solitude and in the silence of the night. Upon my heart rests always her portrait.

In camp, up country, at the long dinners, at the dull receptions, at the state balls she lies upon my heart and in it.

My eyes wander gloomily over the assembly, and I see the crowd pour into the room and round me, and I know nothing except that One is not there.

As we dance my partner throws and crushes herself vainly against my breast, the thin card lies between.

I look on her with disgust, and I drop her as soon as possible. If she clings to me, as we sit or stand after, and practises on me all her repelling arts, in spite of cold looks and cutting answers, a wild impulse comes over me to tear open my shirt, disclose the portrait where it sleeps, and say :

“You miserable little flesh doll, can you rival that? Can you stir the passions that

exhausted themselves for her? Can you rekindle the sacred flame?"

Of course I say nothing, nor would I expose the holy face to her venal eyes.

And when I return and the key is turned in my own door, I stand before the long portrait of Naranyah and look up with dimmed and clouded eyes.

"You see," I murmur, "your rule is, as always, undivided." But I know that she is dead, dead in Constantinople, and cannot hear.

Yet sometimes it almost seems, as if in pity for her solitary lover, lying with the nails sunk deep in the palms of his clenched hands and the teeth deep in his lip to still the old, wild longing, her darling vision comes, and each time it departs the parting smile is brighter, each time I know the hour is nearer when I can depart also.

For some time my father urged upon me the advisability of marrying, but I have convinced him it is impossible, and on some hints from his friend Graves, he has wisely dropped the subject.

No; his son is living and a credit to him as the world goes; but this I cannot do, allow another head to rest upon the breast where once Naranyah lay, and upon which she died;

scare from my pillow her sweet and lovely shade that visits it.

I simply await with impatient longing the inevitable hour.

I know that it must come, however long delayed. At last, at last for me, too, the Nunc Dimittis must sound ; the heart grow cold, and then, and not till then, the mind will be at rest.

, THE END.

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